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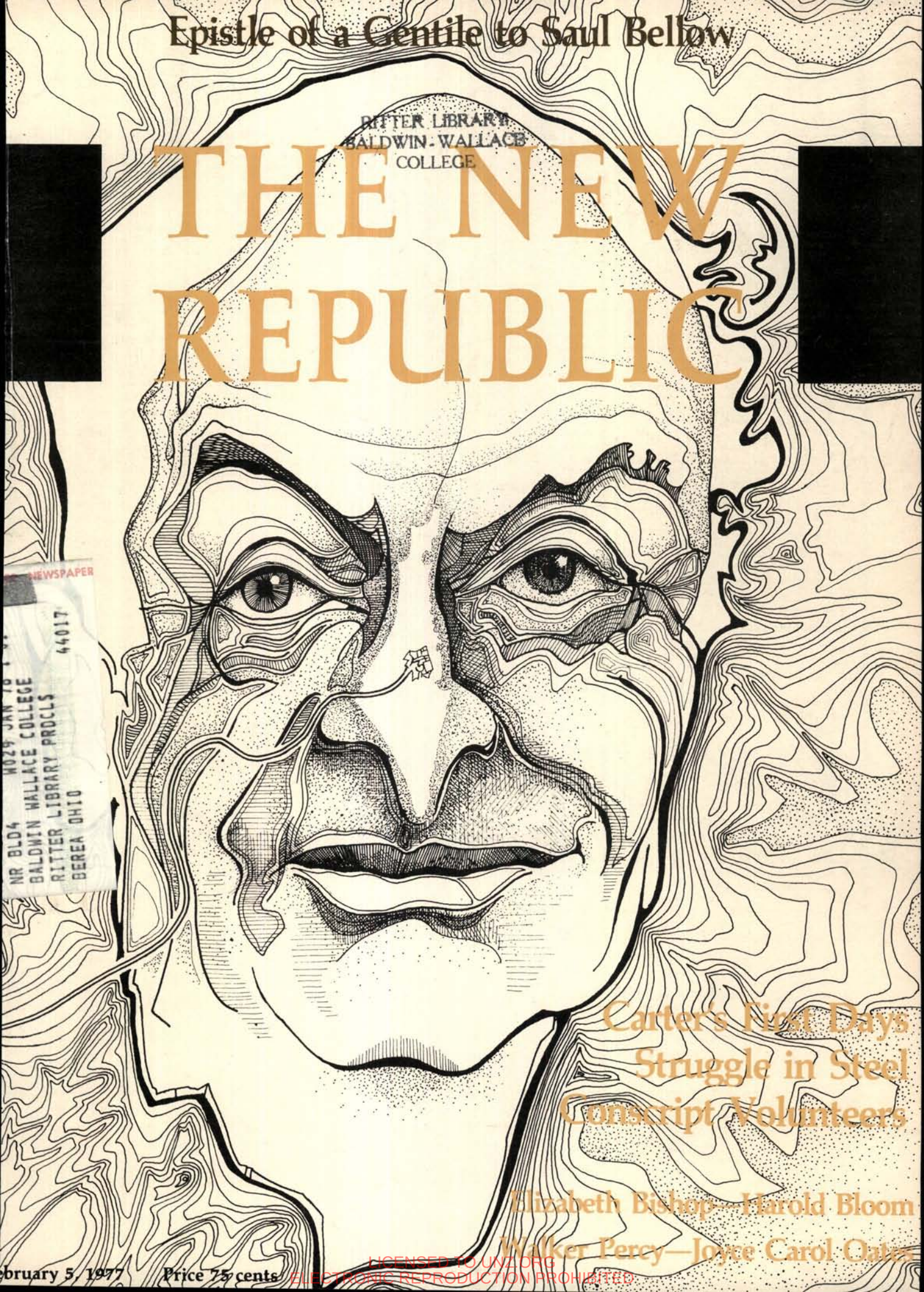

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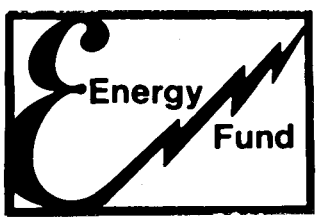


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# TRB ®

from Washington
February 5, 1977


## Checks in the Mail

I don't guarantee the details of this scene but something very much like it may happen a million times next summer. Willie Brown, who lives in a walk-up tenement with his wife and three children, will get a formal-looking cellophane-window letter from the United States Treasury. While the family watches fearfully Willy slits it open with trembling hands and inside there is a government check for $250.

What has Willie, a hard-working, poorly paid toiler, just on the poverty-line, done to receive this? Why, he has managed to earn income below the income tax level. So he is included with the tax-payers under the plan—Nelson Rockefeller and Willie Brown—a $50 credit for each of the five members of his family. What will he do with it? Spend it. He has been assigned a modest role in the war to stimulate the economy. He is willing to do his share.

If you don't believe this little drama watch the deliberations of the House Ways and Means Committee, scheduled to meet Wednesday, February 2, to consider President Carter's fiscal stimulus package. It's a complicated affair, to last two years and cost $30 billion with a lot of things included. One of them is a proposed one-shot tax rebate item to cost maybe seven to 11 billion dollars. Out of about 85 million people who filed tax returns last year some 16 million didn't include money in their replies because they were below the tax level. Willie Brown was one of them—a "nontaxable" as the Treasury quaintly classifies him. Why should he get money back from the Treasury now if he never sent any in? A couple of reasons. Cold-bloodedly, he will probably spend his rebate faster than anybody else. And secondly, because a lot of people, including the Carter administration, feel that you can't help the middle class without helping the poor. It's that old compassion poking itself in again. The cost for including the Willie Browns, the nontaxables, is about $1.5 billion in the overall bill, it is estimated.

The idea seems to be sliding by pretty much unnoticed which, I think, is a good thing. It is a lot less radical than it looks, this business of the Treasury sending out income tax checks to people who can't afford to send them in. It has been kicking around for a long time and in 1962 conservative economist Milton Friedman formalized it as a "negative income tax." Why not use the mechanism by which we now collect tax revenue from people with incomes above some minimum level to provide financial assistance to people with incomes below that level, he asked? Friedman argued that this would be better than establishing a huge welfare bureaucracy in which social workers spent 90 percent of their time spying on recipients to see if they met the means test. Friedman was economic consultant to presidential candidate Barry Goldwater in 1964. Some 1200 economists from 150 different institutions endorsed a variant of the negative income tax in 1968 though they called it "incentive income supplement."

Instead came the War on Poverty, a humane but confused program costing billions annually in a series of overlapping and contradictory plans that are probably the worst legislative nightmare of modern times. As Joseph A. Pechman and Alice Rivlin said in a paper in 1972, "The present welfare system is unworkable. . .this patchwork of public assistance programs is a failure."

Many agree. Richard Nixon, prompted by Pat Moynihan, briefly supported a Family Assistance Program which was, in effect, a negative income tax, under a different name, directed to families of the working poor who had children.

I don't know how far the Carter scheme will go. Tax rebates are supposed to be paid just this once. Yet it will be odd if somebody doesn't note that in the course of them the government is paying out checks to poor people, without any more test than normal income tax procedure, and that the same procedure might help to simplify the welfare mess to which Mr. Carter is pledged to turn his attention later on.

In the meantime, if the scheme goes through, it will be amusing to watch the faces of the Willie Brown family when the check comes through. The Budget people also tell me that there are about 16 million citizens who don't show up on tax lists, half of them supposed to be

*(continued on page 38)*

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# Mercenaries Or Conscripts

The biggest deal struck during Richard Nixon's term in office was not with ITT or the Texas milkmen, but with the middle-class parents of draft-age men. Its name was the "volunteer army." It came about because neither the warhawks nor the dissenters could have their way on Vietnam: Congress fidgeted and debated, unable to decide whether to press on with the war or call a halt. As time passed, thousands of men died and more were drafted to fill their places, until in the end even the sons of the well-to-do were being driven into the army's clutches.

Sen. Ted Kennedy sped the crisis to a climax by winning passage of a new military draft law based on the lottery, with no deferments permitted. After that, the pressure to end the war mounted dramatically. Richard Nixon proposed a way out. He would end the draft and create instead a "volunteer" army whose ranks would be filled with eager recruits, drawn partly by a sense of duty and partly by higher pay scales. Congress agreed. In return, Nixon and the military got a brief respite in which they bombed and blasted their way to the "peace with honor" of 1973. Then the war was over.

Although it may have seemed a comfortable way round the crisis of the early '70s, the volunteer army has an ugly side that is just beginning to make itself clear. Cost is a problem, but only a secondary one, we think. The real flaw is that the volunteer army isn't volunteer at all, but to an increasing degree, mercenary. The Pentagon's latest studies show that, as many people predicted, the ranks have steadily filled with blacks since the draft ended. Presumably these "volunteers" are the desperate unemployed who could find no other work, but felt that they had to have a career of some kind. At present, nearly 30 percent of the new male recruits coming into the army for the first time are black. Although the army tries to keep its racial makeup roughly in proportion with the civilian population, it has not been successful in recent years: nearly a quarter of the troops on active duty are now classified as "minority." These figures raise the spectre of an army made up of black cannon fodder commanded by an officer corps that is disproportionately white. If the trend continues, the divisions between the bottom and top ranks of the military will be even sharper than they were during the Vietnam war, and more explosive.

The Pentagon worries about this, but in public it seems to worry more about cost. A low but discernible rumble of anti-volunteer sentiment spread through the



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defense establishment this winter as the Carter administration moved into town. The first to raise the question that we noticed was the army chief of staff, General Bernard Rogers, speaking last December before the Wilson Fellows at the Smithsonian. He was concerned about the rising cost and declining quality of his soldiers: Congress would have to appropriate rapidly increasing sums for recruitment, he predicted, reinstate the draft, or watch the strength of US forces decline. Nearly 60 percent of the Defense Department's budget already goes to personnel costs (including pensions). And even with the higher pay and economic recession last year, the army noticed no marked increase in volunteers. The army, navy and marine corps are having trouble maintaining authorized manpower levels, and as a result, they may begin to lower the standards of admission.

Not long after Rogers spoke, Sen. John Stennis, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, told the press that he thought the draft would have to be reconsidered "in some few years." Last week Senate Minority Leader Howard Baker and Sen. Sam Nunn, chairman of the Armed Services Manpower Subcommittee, spoke critically of the volunteer army.

This new interest in national service, according to an aide at the Senate Armed Services Committee, arises not from a sudden appreciation of the principle at stake, but from a practical worry. The American Federation of Government Employees has begun unionizing drives at several bases. An all-union army would push personnel costs even higher and give the Defense Department the kind of bargaining headaches that every big-city mayor endures when dealing with the police, firemen, garbagemen and teachers; the department is adamantly opposed to the idea because it would weaken discipline. It would also siphon away money that could be spent on machines of war. Ironically, now that the US is at peace, the draft—or national service, a vague term that subsumes non-compulsory and non-military proposals—looks like a way out.

It may be too late to turn back to the draft. Even the army concedes as much. "The will isn't there," an officer in the press section explained last week. He thought that even if the Pentagon supported the idea, the politicians would back off because their constituents wouldn't let them vote for it.

Morris Janowitz, a specialist in military socioeconomics at the University of Chicago, expects that the draft will *not* return. "It's great that 10 years after the fact, we're going to have a debate on national service. We didn't debate the volunteer force when we adopted it, but I'm delighted that now we're going to try to find out what we got ourselves into." Janowitz believes that a decade ago when the war was on and the topic hot, it might have been possible to devise a universal service system incorporating the draft. But no longer. Now that the draft is gone, the only feasible approach, he thinks, is to create an all-volunteer system that would include civilian as well as military service and be fueled only by a sense of duty (not compulsion).

Don Eberly, a policy planner on the staff of Action in Washington, DC, has for many years advocated the creation of a universal youth service plan, but his program would have no link with the military. He designed it originally as an alternative to military service, and it was endorsed by the National Advisory Commission on the Selective Service chaired by Burke Marshall a decade ago. But now that the draft has been abolished, it is seen essentially as a youth employment plan, and as such is supported in various forms by former Rep. Andrew Young and Sens. Hubert Humphrey, Jacob Javits, Henry Jackson, Charles Mathias and others. Jimmy Carter has said that he supports the concept, but hasn't explained how he would carry it out. None of the youth service programs mentioned above would help the army, however. On the contrary, any attempt to create interesting public service jobs for young people would make the army's task more difficult; the alternative service jobs would of course be more popular, and potential army recruits would opt for civilian work.

The government will have to continue raising salaries to keep the ranks filled, and soon federal taxpayers may grow as weary of the volunteer army as New Yorkers are of the city sanitation service. That's a problem with mercenaries, whether they are deployed on the battle front or the garbage front. They take risks and pains the rest of us would like to avoid, but they also make large demands of their employers, and often get what they want. A mercenary army (which ours has not yet become) develops interests and appetites that set it apart from the rest of society.

We would prefer to return to a draft lottery system, not to bring back the past but to accomplish two things for the future. First, a draft would do away with the class and racial distortions that now exist in the army by filling the ranks with a randomly chosen, representative group of citizens. It would ensure that the society's mood and values were represented within the military. Second, it would eliminate an important objection to the proposal for a much-needed youth service plan—the objection that the army would never get recruits if the government were offering alternative careers in teaching and conservation.

## Crossovers

Quarrel as one might with some of its other personnel selections, the Carter administration has good taste in journalists. It has lured some of our most esteemed news colleagues to serve as public relations or policy officials on the mysterious Other Side of the press-

*(continued on page 8)*



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# Correspondence

## Failure to Communicate

*To the editors:*

It is precisely editorials like "Good Riddance" (*TNR*, Jan. 15, 1977) that make me wonder about *The New Republic*. With all the brains of the true ideologue, you joyfully lump Messrs. Nixon, Ford and Kissinger together and build your berations around little more than their being (in Kissinger's case, assocated with) Republicans. The parochial tone of automatic anti-Republicanism pervades the editorial and vitiates its good points.

Besides being cloyingly self-congratulatory, your editorial is mean-spirited. "Berating Nixon is always a pleasure; having his memory to kick around will be a source of satisfaction to liberals for many years to come." Well, maybe, "infantile" is more appropriate here.

Finally, I hope you print this because my only other criticism of your magazine is that you so infrequently (and then so stingily) print letters. Frankly, I enjoy the elaborate, sometimes ponderous, exchanges printed in *The New York Review of Books*, but if you don't, I still feel you could provide a meaningful forum for your readers without descending to the one-line trifles in *Time*.

I must admit the photograph of the elephants was magnificent.

*E. Phelps Gay*
*New Orleans, Louisiana*

*In reply:*

We agree with Mr. Gay's comment about letters. Starting with the issue of January 22, we will have letters from *TNR* readers every week.

*The editors*

## Filling a Need

*To the editors:*

Your editorial "Good Riddance" came when I really needed it. I was beginning to believe that no one else cared, especially after watching a Kissinger retrospective on PBS.

If, to be charitable, one admits that the Republicans at least bought us time, one must, to be factual, also add that they bought it at an unconscionable price. Good riddance indeed!

And your article on Dukakis gave me the damnedest *deja vu* feeling, in my triple capacity as California state employee, taxpayer and liberal Democrat.

*Frank A. Marx*
*San Francisco, California*

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government adversary relationship. We do not know whether to cheer our friends, or fear for them. The fate of those who have crossed over in the past instills foreboding. Demons seem to inhabit the Other region; they eat up reporters and spew out flacks. Deceit, Excessive Loyalty, Secrecy and Ambition have possessed past sojourners. Many have lost their souls. Few have ever returned.

Yet, we have hope for these new travelers, who are well-schooled in the virtues of This Side and armed with good judgment. They include Albert Eisele, of the Knight-Ridder newspapers, Vice President Mondale's press secretary; Hodding Carter III, the Mississippi editor, spokesman at the State Department; Eileen Shanahan, of *The New York Times*, at HEW; Thomas Ross, co-author of *The Invisible Government*, at Defense; Jerrold Schecter, of *Time*, at the National Security Council. Michael Janeway of *The Atlantic* is going to be at State, and Leslie Gelb, of the *Times*, will be the new director of State's Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs. We trust they all will continue Over There, as they did Here, to serve truth, maintain skepticism and detachment, purvey reality, not images, and abhor secrecy. We hope they can transform the Other Side, but we doubt it is possible. Better, they should maintain their own honor or, if they think they cannot, observe Jerry terHorst's righteous example, and quit.

# White House Watch
## Carter's First Days

President Carter said after his inauguration that he was enjoying his first days at the White House and his public actions and behavior made it seem that he really was. The country seemed to be enjoying the start of his presidency, too, with its instant change of style and pace from the staid Ford years and from the dimming but still dreadful memories of the last Nixon years.

The change began with the inaugural address and with the new President's walk from the Capitol to the White House with his wife and his daughter Amy. Here this reporter must confess to a dissent from what appears to have been the national reaction to the speech and the walk. Apart from the generous opening line of the address—"I want to thank my predecessor for all he has done to heal our land"—I thought it to be mostly a throw-away collection of standard Carter pieties and, in *New York Times* columnist William Safire's savage phrase, "a themeless pudding." The later information that some of Mr. Carter's closest advisers urged him to dump the salute to Gerald Ford and that others urged him to dump the entire draft and start over, all of this during the weekend before the inaugural, furthered an impression that he was immersed in confusion. The celebrated walk up Pennsylvania Avenue, with TV cameras on the three Carters every step of the way, seemed to me to be of a piece with carrying his own suit bag during his campaign and after his election. His look of simpering self-consciousness when I first saw him lug his bag in Los Angeles last August, in the presence of traveling reporters and cameramen, is unforgettable. And, completing this act of confession without contrition, I welcome and suspect that most other Americans welcome a touch of the imperial in the presidency.

And so, the truth is, does our Jimmy. In a dissection of his character that an associate who knows him very well offered the other day, a sharp distinction was made between President Carter's view of himself and his view of the office. That post-inaugural walk, the threat (unfulfilled at this writing) to wear blue jeans to work in the Oval Office, the suit-bag business, the ordered reduction in White House transportation and related staff services, and the like are said to be intended by him only to diminish the pompish trappings that surround the President. The gestures are not intended and, it is further said, will not be allowed to diminish the presidency. The associate quoted here was on a "Jimmy" basis with Jimmy Carter before the election. When he was asked whether he or, so far as he knew, anyone else outside the Carter family called the President "Jimmy," he said he surely didn't and couldn't imagine others doing so. He added, he doubted that President Carter would tolerate the familiarity if any of his friends and assistants were so foolish as to try it. He expects to be and is "Mr. President." In an unusually colorful and detailed account of the President's first meeting with his cabinet, Deputy Press Secretary Rex Granum remarked at a White House briefing that the discussion "was mostly on a first-name basis." The President, he said, generally called the cabinet members "by their first names."

Question: "Did they call the President by his first name?"

Granum: "They did not. He was the exception."

At this meeting and at the swearing-in ceremony that preceded it, President Carter said some things that were revealing of himself, of the atmosphere in which he hopes to conduct his presidency, and of the goodish amount that he has to learn about government at the peak. One of his campaign commitments, he recalled at the ceremony, "was to turn over the responsibilities of their departments to the cabinet officers themselves." He intended to honor that commitment, he said, and he continued: "There will never be an instance, while I am President, when the members of the White House staff dominate or act in a superior position to the members of our cabinet. When a directive is relayed from the White House to the members of the cabinet, it will indeed come directly from me. I believe in a cabinet administration of our government. And although the major decisions will be made ultimately by me as President,



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which is my constitutional prerogative and responsibility, the Secretaries will run their departments. And this is the way it ought to be."

And, as the President demonstrated at the first cabinet meeting, this is the way it can be only within limits. According to Granum, he peppered the members with directives. They were "to put in writing to him what they planned to do in the next 12 months to get out and see the people of this country." They also were to report to him what they planned to do about reducing the numbers of staff lawyers, transportation provided their assistants and staffs, and the flow of forms and directives from their departments to citizens and businesses. He told them to make sure, personally, that thermostats in their departments' Washington offices and throughout the country were kept down to 65 degrees, as he had ordered at the White House, to save fuel. He said that when he was governor of Georgia he never tolerated dissension within his own staff or within his cabinet and he wasn't going to tolerate it now. He meant as President, still according to Granum, dissension between his White House staff and department officials and dissension between and among the cabinet members. If either form of friction developed, Granum said he meant, they were to report it directly and immediately to him and not let such situations "fester."

They were good words, no doubt reflecting good intentions, but they didn't wholly square with the staff system that was evolving at the Carter White House. Stuart Eizenstat, the assistant for domestic affairs, was expected with the help of two deputies, six senior assistants and several junior assistants to develop basic domestic policy for the President and all the domestic departments. Jack Watson, the cabinet secretary and assistant for inter-governmental relations, told reporters that one of his duties would be to check on whether the domestic departments were or were not executing policy as the President expected them to. Rick Hutcheson, a 24-year-old prodigy of sorts who became candidate Carter's national campaign coordinator and earned a reputation among reporters covering the campaign for cold and ruthless efficiency, is the President's staff secretary with particular responsibility for monitoring the paper flow from the departments to the President. He can't do that without appraising the quality of departmental recommendations and advisories before they reach the President and, on occasion, sending them back for revision. If Hutcheson doesn't do it his actual though unacknowledged superior, Hamilton Jordan, or someone else working under him must and will.

James R. Schlesinger, the President's staff adviser on energy matters and head-to-be of a new, consolidated energy department when and if Congress creates it, understands that in the meantime he and a staff of some eight assistants detailed to him from the gaggle of agencies now dealing with energy problems are to formulate basic policy for those agencies, including some bureaus of the Department of the Interior, and see to it that the determined policy is carried out in the way the President wants it carried out. John O'Leary, the President's choice to head the Federal Energy Administration, worked for Schlesinger when he was chairman of the old Atomic Energy Commission and in effect will be Schlesinger's proxy at FEA.

Before Vice President Walter Mondale departed for Europe and Japan, mainly to assure the governments of our principal allies that President Carter means well by them, reporters traveling with the Vice President were briefed on the purposes of the trip. Arthur Hartman, the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs who is being held over from the Ford administration in that job by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, participated in the briefing. But the principal briefers were Zbigniew Brzezinski, the President's assistant for national security affairs, and his deputy, David Aaron. Brzezinski has selected and hired his own press spokesman, former *Time* diplomatic correspondent Jerrold Schecter, who also is expected to work with but not for Press Secretary Jody Powell and to handle the NSC staff's congressional relations as well. Nobody of Schecter's stature in journalism has ever before been the NSC spokesman (unless one excepts former AP and ABC correspondent John Scali, who was detested and isolated by Henry Kissinger when he was the security assistant). Schecter started briefing the White House press corps on foreign affairs the first week he was at work, justifying the conclusion that "Zbig" (pronounced s'pig) Brzezinski is not about to leave that area of public interest to the Secretary of State any more than Kissinger did in his time of White House glory. Part of Schecter's work with Powell will be to "coordinate" White House, State and Defense department pronouncements on foreign and national security policy, which will have to mean if it means anything that the department spokesmen are required to say what the President's and Brzezinski's spokesmen are saying on any given subject.

Discussion of Jimmy Carter with his people discloses a characteristic that will bear importantly upon his cabinet relationships. He is incurably and naturally ambiguous. His ambiguity can be deliberate, as it often was during his campaign for the presidency. But it's often a product of habit, a form of self-indulgence, and it can be a serious hazard for people who work for him and don't know him well enough to comprehend that he doesn't always and necessarily mean what his generalizations or even his seemingly explicit statements and instructions appear to mean. Mr. Carter assumes that people he deals with do understand this and that his actual meaning is as clear to them as it is to him. Thus when President Carter says "I believe in a cabinet administration of our government" and adds that "the secretaries will run their



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departments," he means that he believes in "cabinet administration" Carter style and expects department heads to "run their departments" in the way and only in the way that he wants them run. Department heads and chief assistants who take him to mean that they are free to run their departments in their way and to shape their own policies are in for real trouble with him. An example cited by a Carter associate the other day was the sequence that led to the much publicized conflict between two of the President's chief assistants, Hamilton Jordan and Jack Watson. When candidate Carter told Watson in the summer of 1976 to separate himself from the campaign and prepare for the post-election transition, Watson went into seclusion and stopped communicating with the campaign director, Jordan. Carter was furious when he discovered that Watson had taken him more literally than he meant to be taken and that as a result the Watson and Jordan operations were badly out of mesh. Jordan, a skilled infighter, made the most of the situation. Watson got the blame and has never completely regained favor with President Carter.

**John Osborne**

Everybody's getting into the act.

# Struggle in Steel

When leadership changes hands in most American trade unions, the designated heirs are normally secure in their ascendancy. That general rule does not apply, at least this year, at the United Steelworkers of America where the February 8 squaring-off between two of its district directors for the right to succeed retiring President I.W. Abel is shaping up as a donnybrook with ramifications reaching well beyond the union's 1.4 million members. The two contenders are Lloyd McBride, 60, district director in the St. Louis area since 1965, the favored candidate of Abel and what the outgoing president refers to as the union's "official family," and Edward Sadlowski, 38, head of the sprawling, Chicago-Gary district 31, the largest in the union, a post he won in 1974 in a Labor Department supervised election.

Campaigning among steelworkers whose contracts now provide regular annual pay increases, an unlimited cost of living clause, widespread health insurance, generous retirement programs and a special one-time bonus for not striking, the principal bread and butter issue between the two men is the Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA). Approved in 1973, ENA was created by Abel as a shield against uncertainties in contract negotiations which were causing steel stockpiling, an increasing tendency among users to rely on import agreements with producers in Japan and Western Europe, and costing jobs in the steel industry at home. Under the no-strike bargaining provisions of ENA, both the union and steel producers are committed to send any deadlocked contract issues to a three-man arbitration panel for a binding decision. For Abel, who pioneered the approach and claims that in its first trial in 1974 it produced the "best settlement in the history of our union," ENA represents a new phase of industry-union relations—labor-management cooperation for greater productivity. To Sadlowski, who promises a full rank-and-file referendum vote on any wage settlement, the agreement is "class collaborationist," contrary to trade unionism and a give-away of the movement's most potent bargaining chip, the right to strike. McBride agrees with Abel that the contract worked well three years ago, but hedges on the future: if key issues are sent to arbitration later this year, he says, ENA should be scrapped.

But the major battle lines have not really been drawn over economic issues. Rather, the contest has become a classic confrontation between the insurgent and the anointed. "Sadlowski is not running against McBride," allows Steelworkers political action director, Dean Clowes, "He's running against I. W. Abel." Sadlowski would agree. His theme is union democracy, direct worker sanctions over whatever is negotiated on his behalf. Under Abel's leadership as a "labor statesman," goes the Sadlowski argument, there has been too much autocracy and concern about productivity.

The rhetoric on both sides has grown progressively bitter and the clash has spread beyond the boundaries of the Steelworkers. Sadlowski has gone outside the labor movement to raise the money necessary to finance his campaign through cocktail parties and dinners around the country and by direct mail appeals to progressive and public interest lists. In turn, Abel has abandoned his early neutrality and waded in on behalf of McBride, charging that Sadlowski is a tool of outsiders who want to buy the election and meddle in the internal affairs of the union.

Very important to the outcome is Abel's official family political machine which McBride's campaign has inherited whole cloth—the 850 paid field staff representatives who act as liaison between the locals and the national union, all the incumbent national officers, virtually all the other district directors—the Steelworkers executive board, and a majority of the top local union officials. Field staff members are hired directly by the international president. Most have ponied up contributions in the range of $500 for the campaign of his designated successor.

Emerging as the most controversial issue in the contest is the Abel-McBride charge that Sadlowski is a means for outsiders—variously labeled as shifty busybodies, pseudo- or limousine liberals, the international socialist coalition, new politics leftists—to use their money to gain a toehold in the union, control its ideas and use it as a base to change society. The issue has even prompted AFL-CIO President George Meany to get



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into the act. Meany charges that raising money from outside sources is illegal, unethical and meddling in the affairs of honest, democratic trade unions. Meany singled out three outsiders for special mention, the economist John Kenneth Galbraith, Victor Reuther, brother of the former United Auto Workers president, and Sadlowski's attorney, Joseph Rauh, who was also legal advisor to United Mineworker's President Arnold Miller during his insurgent campaign against Tony Boyle. All three, says Meany, have engaged in "unrestrained attacks on the present officers of the union and the AFL-CIO."

Predictably, the outsider issue has also lent itself to some classic redbaiting, and syndicated columnists Evans and Novak have already lent their space on two occasions to fuel that fire. Cheering wildly from the sidelines, says Evans and Novak, are the Communist party, the Trotskyist Socialist Workers party and other leftist elements resurfacing on the labor scene. Then, with the routine innuendo, they add, "There is no evidence that Sadlowski solicited leftist aid. But he has not repudiated Communist support."

Running for president of an international union is an expensive business; Abel alleges that 85 percent of Sadlowski's funds come from sources outside the union. Charging that such funds constitute a violation of the union's ban on financing campaigns with employer monies, McBride recently filed suit before a Chicago judge to prevent their use. In rejoinder, Sadlowski opened his books in advance of pre-trial discovery and claimed that only 17 percent of his money represented contributions from outside in gifts of $500 or more. Because the donors' occupations were not itemized in Sadlowski's disclosure, there was no way to calculate how many of his 2000 contributors were steelworkers and how many gave at cocktail parties and other far-flung fundraising events held recently in Washington, New York, Boston and San Francisco. But it is doubtful that the 17 percent represents the correct proportion of outside contributions.

In fairness to Sadlowski, however, it must be said that he is neither running nor raising money under false pretenses. He carries the same message of progressive union democracy to the steelworkers' bars and union halls that he plays to liberals in reach of their checkbooks. "We're not only attempting to take on the hierarchy of the steelworkers union because of the problems that exist on the shop floor," he says. "The ultimate goal is to make this union into the most aggressive and progressive institution that this country has ever seen. We're capable of taking this institution into the streets and solving major problems that confront each and every one of us as American citizens and citizens of the world." The message goes down well. It's the one that I. W. Abel has delivered himself.

On the other hand, Abel and Meany are also dead right in charging that liberals outside the trade union movement are not involved out of any conviction that Ed Sadlowski represents a better deal for workers concerned about job security, grievance procedures or a shorter work week. The liberal outsiders do have ulterior motives. They are involved because, as Abel himself puts it, "Labor is an essential part of the fabric of our democratic society," and unions as institutions represent great influence in public policy.

Liberal outsiders are supporting Ed Sadlowski in part as an extension of their longstanding disagreements with George Meany's leadership of his huge labor federation on non-union issues, especially his foreign policy and more concretely his support for America's involvement in Indochina. To that extent, they are fighting past wars. But they are also involved because of strong evidence from within the labor movement of a similar discontent with the aging president on current matters. There is a steady political polarization between Meany loyalists in the Steelworkers, building trades and other conservative unions, on one side, and more liberal unions both in and outside the federation, such as AFSCME, the UAW, the Electrical Workers, Graphic Artists, Communications Workers, UMW and National Education Association, on the other. These unions represented the core of labor support for the national Democratic ticket in 1972 when Meany elected to sit out the McGovern-Nixon contest, and they set up separate political action units of their own and worked closely together to assure a strong voice for labor in picking the 1976 Democratic nominee and framing the current party platform.

Liberals are also involved now because the AFL-CIO stands on the threshhold of major change. At 82, George Meany faces imminent retirement and his successor, Lane Kirkland, will command nothing like Meany's influence on the federation's executive council. Also, the 1.4 million-member UAW, which left the federation over Meany's conservative policies and the autocratic control he exercised, is now seriously considering reaffiliation, a move that would signal a loosening of federation control of constituent unions. Finally, the trend toward younger, more liberal leadership evident in the polarization could be further extended by elections in several unions this year—the UAW, Mineworkers, Machinists and Steelworkers. But the Steelworkers and Sadlowski are the most symbolic and the most important because I.W. Abel has been a solid Meany loyalist on every issue where the lines were drawn between America's labor and liberal establishments. "Think what it might have meant," says one of Sadlowski's outsiders "instead of having a yes-man backing Meany at every turn to have had a forthright voice at Meany's right hand saying 'Nosir' to Vietnam and 'Nosir' to neutrality on McGovern."

Outsiders who are filling Ed Sadlowski's coffers have no idea if he will be a good administrator of the union he wants to lead; they are backing him because they believe that he will be a reliable spokesman for



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progressive causes on the AFL-CIO executive council. They insist their dollars are well and properly spent because labor has a major role in public affairs, including efforts to bring a greater measure of democracy to other institutions. That includes congressional and election reform, of course, but it also includes efforts to alter the policies and structures of corporations by making contributions and voting stocks held by pension funds on behalf of social action and antipollution groups waging stock proxy battles.

Unions have been in the forefront of public issues, and most would argue properly so. "I see the role of the labor movement as one of making sure that we have a steady, increasing social revolution," says I.W. Abel. That pronouncement and labor's record in social and political causes are inconsistent with Abel's other view that trade unions are private associations entitled to be protected from the influence of outsiders. But the assertion of the public's right to help determine a union's future finds almost no support in the rest of the labor movement. Sadlowski gets private encouragement and some cash contributions from officers, field staff and members of other unions, but Abel and Clowes have been far more successful in persuading the AFL-CIO hierarchy, including Lane Kirkland, to back McBride.

Abel himself was once an insurgent of sorts. In 1965, he ran against incumbent president David McDonald from his position as secretary-treasurer in a move that resembled an uprising of the palace guard more than the rank-and-file insurgency the official family faces today. Then, Abel, Sadlowski and Joe Rauh were on the same side. "I worked my butt off for Abel in 1965," Sadlowski says. "I stood in snowstorms for the guy." Sadlowski has obviously altered his view. So has Abel. When outsider Rauh sent him a $100 campaign contribution, Abel cashed the check.

What made Abel's challenge to McDonald possible—he won by 8000 votes of 600,000 cast—is that the Steelworkers are one of the few unions, and by far the largest, to elect officers by direct, secret ballot referendum. But the union also has a voting membership larger than the eligible electorate of about half the states in the US spread out not only coast to coast but throughout 400 locals in Canada as well. Both sides concede their campaign costs will exceed $300,000, and running against the entrenched union leadership Sadlowski's candidacy could not get off the ground without benefit of outside funds.

A fair amount of Sadlowski's money is earmarked to send pollwatchers to the nearly 6000 polling places at plant gates and union halls on February 8. Fears of election fraud are well enough grounded; Sadlowski fought for two years to get a court-ordered rerun in his own district, proving in the process that ballots had been destroyed and that union offices and employees had been used against him illegally. From retirement, former president McDonald weighed in on the issue of corruption, telling a *Penthouse* magazine interviewer, "Unless Sadlowski has an overwhelming victory in the United States, he will not win the presidency. The Canadian return sheets will carry enough votes in favor of Lloyd McBride that he will be declared elected. I know how to run elections . . . I stole four of them."

Under the Landrum-Griffin Act, the Labor Department has the authority to step in and supervise all aspects of the balloting, which would be the best assurance of an election unmarred by irregularities or intimidation. It would also avoid potential disruption in the critical contract negotiations which the union faces later this spring should the outcome be contested in court. But the department has taken the view that it cannot intervene to correct fraud until fraud has occurred, agreeing only to supply compliance officers for the 22 American district offices on election day and department officials to total local tally sheets in Pittsburgh. There is no presence whatever at the polling places in local unions where irregularities normally occur, and just enough at the district level to give the election a patina of legitimacy. Rauh is wary; "It's an effort to give the Good Housekeeping seal of approval to a corrupt election," he says.

One consequence of the intensive press attention the contest has attracted is that public projections of the issues and the men have been oversimplified to Sadlowski's advantage. He has become a press hero, a tough-talking, hard-nosed mill rat who began as an oiler, worked his way up through the union hierarchy from griever to district president, who still bellies up to the bar with the boys and is carrying his case for union democracy against a monolithic reactionary establishment. It is no longer possible to sort out truth from fiction, but the myth suits Sadlowski's purposes. By being blunt and going public with their opposition to Sadlowski, George Meany and I.W. Abel have pressed themselves into service on his behalf. They have legitimated his charges and elevated his cause. If he wins, Sadlowski will owe them thanks.

Also, the attention and the oversimplification tend to eliminate ambiguities and have a useful multiplier effect in the conflict; together they have enabled Sadlowski to gain the visibility he needs to attract non-attentive members and arouse those who are concerned but inactive. Recently Abel played another trump card. "If Sadlowski is elected, I would consider it a vote of no confidence," he said. "I would resign immediately." In no time, Sadlowski leaflets were at plant gates and fundraisers, "On February 8, let's show Abel the door!"

There are risks in all this, and, to be sure, the steelworkers themselves bear the brunt of those risks. The workers on the line are concerned primarily about contracts; the demagoguery and oversimplification on both sides obscure important job-related issues and impede judgments about McBride's or Sadlowski's



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qualifications to run the union. Then, should Sadlowski win, he also faces the problem of undeliverable expectations—a syndrome familiar to the product of the last public crusade in a union election, Arnold Miller of the UMW.

Indeed, should Sadlowski win, the new Steelworkers president would be an untested commodity in many important respects. His 18 month stewardship of district 31, which makes up fully 10 percent of the union's entire membership, offers little evidence either way. Abel kept the old international staff in place, refusing to allow Sadlowski to name his own people. But even loyal local supporters come up short when asked for examples of Sadlowski efforts to dramatize problems with health and safety conditions, impediments in the grievance procedure and the like. Sadlowski would also face major problems consolidating his leadership of the international union even if he won. He has a better chance to be elected than any other member of his five-man slate of national officers. Nearly all the executive council will likely be made up of district directors who preferred his opponent. In other unions, some have even suggested that Abel's chair next to Meany may not be available to Sadlowski—AFL-CIO executive council membership is not automatic to union presidents—implying that it may not be extended. But that isn't likely: to deny a seat at the council table to the insurgent president of the largest constituent union would signal a breakup of the federation itself.

If Sadlowski loses, the whole enterprise will certainly be a step backward for "outsiders" and possibly for the Steelworkers as well. McBride will join other union chiefs in pushing for a tightening up of federal laws to keep non-members from being involved in union elections. Also, both Abel and McBride have indicated their sympathy for a move to abandon the present secret ballot election process in favor of selecting national officers at convention. At a Steelworkers convention, one-quarter of the voting delegates are members of the union staff, appointees of the president, and they have proved in the present contest that they are not a group with any appetite for insurgency.

Abel and McBride once again came to Sadlowski's aid by announcing their preference for election by convention, thereby verifying his claims of autocratic leadership. "That prospect strikes fear in my heart," he tells rallies. "If we don't win this election, you'll rue the day you supported us, because you'll never get a chance to elect officers in this union again!"

Can he win? Wager now and you can get good odds anywhere in the labor movement that McBride will soon occupy the chair next to Meany and have pretty solid reasons to back up the money. The Steelworkers are a sprawling international union with basic steel—the mill workers—making up less than 40 percent of the membership. In addition, there are scores of smaller affiliates in related industries (aluminum, copper and can manufacturing) and not-so-related industries (hardware and grocery workers, the employees of Chock-Full-o'-Nuts shops in New York and even workers on mushroom farms). Basic steel is a feisty lot, and that is where voter turnout is high and Sadlowski is strong. But elsewhere, and even among older workers in basic steel, the issue is contracts and there are plenty of members who like the job Abel has done and will prefer to accept his judgment on the next president than to roll the dice with Eddie Sadlowski. The crusade of outsiders notwithstanding, no one can convince them that Abel is Tony Boyle.

On the other hand, four years ago an unknown staff attorney ran against I.W. Abel and got 40 percent in an almost unnoticed, very low turnout election. Sadlowski points out that he is running against the official machine of the largest union in the AFL-CIO from a shaky base in a single district; if he wins, it would shake the labor establishment of this country to its eyeteeth. The question now is not whether he has raised enough money or won enough attention to effectively press his case with the rank and file—it is whether the much vaunted insurrectionary mood among younger workers actually exists, and whether Eddie Sadlowski has tapped that mood.

Can he win? Both sides admit a lot depends on turnout, and as Steelworkers political director Dean Clowes puts it, "Turnout depends a lot on the weather."

**Ken Bode**

Why your daughter didn't get into law school.

# ETS's Star Chamber

The Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey, rapidly is becoming the cradle-to-grave arbiter of social and economic mobility in America. Its tests determine who will be admitted to the nation's prestigious private schools, to almost all colleges and graduate schools, and even to the practice of medicine and law in many states. The typical educated American breaks the seal of his or her exam book (using the eraser end of a number-two pencil) while still in elementary school, and still is filling in between the pale blue lines well into middle adulthood.

Anyone who must deal with it is completely at the mercy of this private monopoly. He or she must take the tests ETS offers, must supply the information ETS requests, and must pay the fees ETS charges.

Most important, individuals whose lives are crucially affected have no way of checking the accuracy of information ETS supplies to schools, universities and state accreditation boards. ETS has been treated as exempt from the requirements of the Family Education



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Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, commonly known as the Buckley Amendment. This law requires schools to give students access to files containing information about them and limits the use schools can make of this information without a student's permission. The Privacy Act also created a Privacy Commission to study the effects of the act and make recommendations to the office of HEW that administers it. The Privacy Commission currently is considering whether to recommend that ETS lose its exemption. The following cautionary tale may aid the commission in its deliberations.

The story involves the Law School Admissions Test, one of ETS's most popular offerings. When a candidate applies to take the LSAT, the application form asks whether he or she has taken the test before. This question appears among a series of general clerical questions (name, address, and so on). Applicants have no way of knowing that failure to indicate that they have taken the test before (whether by answering the question incorrectly or merely leaving it blank) will have any significant effect on their final applications.

The reason for asking the question was not clerical. Until last year, the test score report form sent to law schools contained—unbeknownst to the student who was paying to have this information sent—a space labeled "unacknowledged repeater." When this space was marked by an asterisk, it indicated that a candidate applying to take the test for the second time had not indicated that this was the case. The asterisk appeared even if a candidate (possibly by accident) failed to answer the question at all. Ralph Smith, a professor and admissions committee member at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, explained that the "unacknowledged repeater" designation raised "a question of [the applicant's] integrity." A number of other law school admissions officers confirmed that this was the construction admissions committees put on the asterisk.

Smith and several others think the appearance of the asterisk kept some applicants out of law school. Of course there are such a variety of reasons an admissions committee can give for denying admission to any one applicant that it is all but impossible to prove that anyone was excluded because of being designated an "unacknowledged repeater."

In the 1975-76 applicant year, the dean of admissions at the University of Pennsylvania Law School noticed that more and more of these asterisks were appearing on LSAT score reports. He reported this to ETS and asked whether the designation was correct in all these cases. Shortly thereafter ETS reponded with a memo sent to all law school admissions deans, which read in part:

> *It has recently become apparent that a problem exists with regard to the flagging of candidates as "unacknowledged repeaters" (an asterisk in the area under "Unacknowledged repeater" in the summary section of reports). This problem has been caused by several factors, some of which raise policy questions which will be considered next spring. The result for the current year, however is that some candidates who are* not *"unacknowledged repeaters" have been designated as such.*

The memo warned that the designation should be disregarded and explained that "it will not be possible to identify all such candidates" (those wrongly identified as "unacknowledged repeaters"). For 1976-77, ETS has dropped the asterisk.

There are several disturbing things about this incident. First of all, since applicants have had no way of knowing that the "unacknowledged repeater" designation existed, discovery of this error depended on the fortuitous curiosity of one admissions dean. Second, since applicants are not permitted to see the reports ETS sends to law schools, individuals would have had no way of clearing themselves of false charges even if they had known that the problem existed. Third, even after the error was discovered, ETS kept it quiet and apparently made no attempt either to correct its past mistakes or to inform the applicants who were harmed by them. In short, candidates who were perfectly acceptable may have been denied access to their chosen profession without ever suspecting the reason.

ETS avoided any mention of the "unacknowledged repeater" incident in testimony at a Privacy Commission hearing in November. Robert Solomon, vice president of ETS, was asked specifically and repeatedly about errors that might be correctable if students had access to their ETS files, but he failed to mention the asterisk episode and insisted that ETS errors were "to the best of our experience" no problem. Solomon now says the failure to mention it was an oversight: "We had no intention not to mention that." Tom White, an ETS official who deals with law schools, says the episode "just wasn't important enough to mention. All of the discussions at the commission were based on what our system is now doing. No effort to describe the system as it has grown and changed was made."

ETS argues it should continue to be exempt from the Buckley Amendment because of the time and expense that would be required to bring its files into compliance, and because the organizations that contract for its services provide sufficient regulation. Of course far poorer organizations, and others (such as state universities) with many more people looking over their shoulders, have been forced to comply. Even apart from the Buckley Amendment, ETS is far too immune from public regulation and scrutiny, given the function it serves and the power it enjoys. There is no good reason to continue this exemption as well.

**Kim Masters**

*Kim Masters* is a Washington education writer.



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Carter's economy looks just like Ford's did.

# Sorry, No Change

The advice and admonitions of outgoing public officials normally have as little effect on a nation's destiny as letters to the editor of the *Tupecola* (Miss.) *Journal*. This goes as well for Gerald Ford and the larger part of the budget and economic messages he was required by law to deliver just a few days before leaving office. To the extent that a president can promptly alter the economic course of a bulky ship of state, with an immense momentum of its own, this executive responsibility is now of course entirely Jimmy Carter's. Even so, Ford's parting messages, and the plans they contain, have an importance that was no doubt unintended. They serve as a reminder that political advertising can be as deceptive as the other kind. Despite all the campaign hoopla and transition memoranda, the economic stabilization plans currently promised by President Carter turned out to be not markedly different from those of ex-President Ford, as actually pursued in the past year and proposed in his *pro forma* "messages."

Neither the outgoing nor the incoming president has promised full employment—not soon and not in the determinable future either. Neither one provides a substantive plan for stopping inflation, nor even to retard it. Both present a legislative package of modest stimulation, featuring tax reductions, and amounting to from $23 to $30 billion over the next two years. Even if the upper end of the range is more likely (as Carter aides indicated last week), that comes to less than one percent, annually, of our present giant-sized gross national product of $1700 billion, providing the smashing impact of a wet noodle. Both men forecast a budget deficit for fiscal 1977 (which ends this September 30) in the neighborhood of $60 billion, greater than any in history with the possible exception of 1976. Hence, regardless of the way the vote may have gone last November, the prospect would have been and still is for considerable unemployment *and* inflation, at least through the next two years. Nor is there anything, other than the usual deathless oratory of politicians, to warrant any greater hope of a stable, full employment economy in the longer run.

This is not to say that the new president has been somehow mesmerized into accepting all the budgetary plans of his predecessor. Despite the modest protestations of incoming budget director Lance, Carter is as free as any other president, facing a new year, to present his own budget, changing a great many of Ford's proposed allocations. The important exception that would always hold, of course, is the so-called "uncontrollable" items fixed by contract, such as social security. No doubt substantial revisions will be introduced by Carter as well as by Congress. Democrats in the executive or legislature are not likely to accept Ford's projected cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, public service employment, housing, food and income assistance, or that so much generosity (a $22 billion boost from fiscal 1976 to 1978) will be lavished on the Defense Department. In the longer run, over the next three or four years, Carter may well fulfill his pledges to reorganize the entire federal government, reform the tax system, sterilize the welfare mess and perform similar exploits. But right now, in the broad aggregates of government spending and taxes, and in the ceaseless war against inflation and unemployment, no substantial change in tactics appears in the offing. That is the most significant element in the economic news of the last several weeks.

Why this timidity on the part of Carter, bringing him so close to the frankly conservative and cautious Ford? The answer lies in two parameters, as economists call them, that are constant for both men. The first and more fundamental is the ruling stabilization ideology. Ever since World War II conventional economists have been tied professionally to the assumed magic of Keynesian fiscal policies. Their reputations hinge upon it. Their emotions cling to it. With increasing orthodoxy and boldness, every president from Truman through Ford has used it. Now President Carter, who won office by running against "Washington," has accepted Washington's conventional wisdom, not to mention many of its proponents in key cabinet or subcabinet posts.

The conventional economic wisdom recognizes just three basic tools for stabilizing the economy. They allow public officials to give the appearance of being in command by merely pressing buttons, so to speak. The tools are tax changes (given the most stress of all), interest rate changes, and alterations in public spending which since FDR have dwindled in importance to next to nothing. When unemployment is the dominant problem, taxes and interest rates are lowered and public spending, if used at all, rises. This tactic always creates some jobs, but—with increasing embarrassment for its proponents— always stimulates inflation. When inflation draws to the forefront as the overriding problem, the opposite steps are taken. Taxes and interest rates are raised and public spending is contracted. This usually retards inflation but always creates unemployment. In this way the economy has see-sawed through cycles that have been continuous but not precisely repetitive: the swings have grown sharper, with joblessness more widespread on each downturn and inflation progressively more alarming and stubborn. This trend yields the second fixed parameter faced by both men.

The past three years have witnessed a more severe *combination* of high unemployment and briskly rising prices than ever before in modern history—roughly eight percent of the labor force jobless and an annual inflation rate wavering between five and 10 percent or more. It was so for Ford when he took office in August 1974, and it is so for Carter now, despite some



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improvement from the worst days of 1975. Therefore, like his predecessor, the new president can't pump up the economy very much because that would excite inflation, already much too great. Nor can he dampen it down significantly, because that would spread unemployment, still at a near-depression level. Ford's answer, beginning in 1975, was to pump up the economy, but just a little. That's Carter's answer too. The strategy is to keep the economy fairly slack, even though improving modestly, tolerating considerable joblessness in the hope that inflation will gradually, somehow, subside.

That hope is virtually certain to prove groundless. There are just two possibilities. The first, though not the more likely, is that things will go according to plan at least at the start. That means that economic activity will expand only slightly, producing at best a seven-percent jobless rate even by the end of 1978. (That estimate is in line with the official projection of the Congressional Budget Office.) Will the congressmen and senators up for election in November of that year sit idly by, with unions, blacks and others roaring? The chances are that spending bills and/or further tax cuts will become the order of the day. If enacted, as they probably will be, you can bet on a sharply accelerating price level—on top of a six or seven percent inflation rate that probably will prevail a year from now. What then? The customary "cure," sooner or later, is a corrective recession.

The other possibility is that the inflationary crisis will come sooner. Business activity shows every sign at present of gathering steam on its own. Consumer spending is brisk and capital spending, heretofore lagging, has given recent evidence of revival. If that trend persists, past experience teaches, our highly excitable wage and price levels will be dancing well before the end of this year.

In short, simply pumping up the economy just a little, or three or four times as much as that, won't do. Inflation remains the ogre. There is a way out of the dilemma that would get at the structural imbalances that *cause* the difficulties. (See my "The Collapse of Keynesianism," *TNR*, May 5, '73.) But that would involve minor surgery, or as the seers of Capitol Hill would put it, more national economic planning than the present political climate will tolerate. A compromise that would provide a partial answer, much better than none, is wage and price controls. I do not mean by this the crude and ineffective voluntary "guidelines" already mentioned *sotto voce* by some Carter advisers. When last seen in 1966 guidelines were crumbling under pressure; and were not of much use before that date. I do mean mandatory, selective controls, carefully framed to survive the long pull, and aimed at the outstanding abusers of economic power in big business and organized labor. With their help the presently impossible could be realized—an expansion to high employment without an unacceptable rate of inflation. But they won't work if delayed until *after* the wage and price elevation is much greater than it is at present. The effort would be as futile as a water pistol in a forest fire. Carter should establish controls and standards within the next 60 days. Business fears can be soothed with a new investment tax credit. Labor could be easily mollified by the repeal of right-to-work laws. Both measures are eminently supportable on independent grounds.

**Melville J. Ulmer**

## Bargaining chips are no bargain.

# SALT II And Beyond

Time is running out for the strategic arms limitation talks. The SALT I offensive arms agreement expires in October. An extension is possible, but a simple extension of its limits on intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) might be worse than no agreement at all: Soviet and American leaders might be lulled into believing they can dawdle over SALT II and still control the nuclear arms race. They cannot.

While negotiators for both countries have been trying to limit weapons conceived in the 1960s, scientists and military officers have been designing arms for the '80s. Because arms control never has enjoyed a high priority in either country, it has lagged well behind military innovations.

The framework for SALT II was set in November 1974 when President Ford and General Secretary Brezhnev met in Vladivostok. The *aide-memoire* which followed limited each country to 2400 "strategic launchers" (ICBMs, SLBMs and bombers), of which no more than 1320 can be armed with clusters of bombs known as MIRVs (for multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles). These large numbers led Walter Mondale to observe, "It looks like both sides took their weapons programs, stapled them together, and called the result a breakthrough."

No formal treaty has followed SALT I because the two superpowers have been unable to resolve two marginal issues. President Carter said last week he "would not let those two items stand in the way of some agreement." But so far they have done exactly that. One issue is the Soviet Backfire bomber. Is it a strategic weapon intended for use against the United States? If so, it must count in the Russians' quota. In January 1976 Brezhnev reportedly gave Secretary of State Henry Kissinger evidence to show that Backfire was designed to attack targets on the periphery of the Soviet Union rather than the American heartland. An official of the Central Intelligence Agency subsequent-



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ly testified that the new Soviet bomber "is primarily a peripheral weapon at this point."

If the Vladivostok limits ultimately are codified into international law, the United States will have to cut neither its present forces nor its planned deployments. If the Backfires are not included in their quotas, the Soviets will have to make only a small cutback to get under the 2400 ceiling, but they could do it rather painlessly by deactivating some of their obsolete equipment. If, however, the Backfire were to be included under that ceiling, the Soviets would have to undertake a much larger retrenchment. By taking a hard line on the Backfire, American negotiators are asking for mutual arms control through unilateral Soviet disarmament. The Russian official who would recommend such a "bargain" to his superiors might soon find himself servicing snowplows in Sosnogorski.

The Backfires are no great military threat, even if used strategically by the Soviets. In the age of the missile, bombers are not first-strike weapons; and as retaliatory weapons, the Backfires could be more than offset by increasing the number of US fighter-bombers in Europe or on aircraft carriers on the periphery of the USSR. The Backfire is a *political* problem. To resolve the Backfire issue President Carter's negotiators will have to find a political formula acceptable to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well as the Soviets. One approach might be an explicit written agreement from the Russians, limiting the deployment of Backfire so as to guarantee that it could not be used as a strategic weapon against the US. Another approach might be to include the Backfires in the Vladivostok ceiling, but to drop that ceiling from 2400 to, perhaps, 2000 strategic launchers. This would require *both* sides to dismantle some of their bombers and missiles. It would also constitute the first step toward mutual disarmament, a goal often professed by Soviet and American leaders but never acted upon.

The second and more complicated issue deadlocking SALT II is the cruise missile. The United States had cruise missiles on land and at sea until the early 1960s but declared them obsolete once ballistic missiles were deployed in force. Essentially a pilotless jet aircraft, the cruise missile is making a comeback, thanks to technological advances in propulsion, guidance and miniaturization. In the 1950s cruise missiles were huge, inaccurate weapons; now they can be made small and highly accurate.

The SALT I accords would not have been possible without reconnaissance satellites which enable us to count the number of Soviet ICBMs, SLBMs and bombers. The air-launched cruise missile (ALCM) would be carried on bombers and could be spotted the same way by satellite. But the sea-launched cruise missile (SCLM) is to be launched through standard, 21-inch torpedo tubes, and could be hidden aboard literally hundreds of American submarines and other naval craft. There is no way satellites can determine the number or character of such missiles aboard a ship.

The sea-launched cruise missile is not intended to be our first or even second line of attack. A navy spokesman told a Senate hearing that the SLCM was planned as a "reserve force" which "could be utilized in forward deployment for a reserve nuclear capability." In short, the SLCM is militarily unnecessary. Moreover, the Pentagon estimates that we are well ahead of the Soviets in developing cruise missile technology. So the United States could delay its development of the SLCM at no military cost whatsoever. And the benefit of persuading the Soviets to do likewise could be great. Because so many of our cities are situated near the coasts, a complete ban on nuclear-tipped cruise missiles which could be launched by submarines would be very much to our advantage.

The navy is not terribly enthusiastic about building an intercontinental SLCM. That navy spokesman told the senators, "If some kind of constraints on strategic cruise missiles were able to get the United States a SALT agreement equitable to both sides, I couldn't oppose constraints on strategic cruise missiles." In other words, the SLCM is intended not for military purposes but as a "bargaining chip" to win Soviet concessions at SALT II. It's a dangerous tactic. MIRVs, for example, were originally designed to counter a possible Soviet ABM system, but even though the United States and the Soviet Union ultimately agreed to restrict ABMs, a strong constituency of military, political, industrial and labor interests managed to build sufficient momentum behind MIRVs to prolong and, indeed, expand these programs. As a result, the two superpowers now are adding thousands of warheads to their arsenals each year while adding nothing to their security. Although the former secretary of State seldom second-guessed his past decisions in public, in 1974 Kissinger ruefully reflected: "I wish that I had thought through the implication of the MIRVed world."

The implications of a world with SLCMs are even more disturbing. These weapons could be hidden aboard hundreds of naval vessels. Satellites would be unable to verify their number or, perhaps, even their existence. If the United States exploits its temporary lead in SLCM technology, it will only be a matter of time before the Soviet Union catches up. In short, we would inevitably lose whatever "advantage" we might have gained by being the first nation to deploy the SLCM.

If there is one unambiguous lesson in the nuclear era, it is that the best way to control a weapon is by agreeing not to build it. If the United States temporarily halted work on the SLCM, we would not lose our lead, and we could possibly slow the momentum behind a weapon which could threaten the nuclear balance. "Bargaining chips," once played, are rarely recalled.

The record of compliance with the terms of SALT I



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has been a good one on both sides. Although some contend that the Soviets are not living up to "the spirit of SALT," specific complaints usually center on the unwillingness of the USSR to abide by certain "unilateral interpretations" of the agreement's provisions, such as the American definition of a "heavy missile." But those interpretations were unilateral *precisely* because Soviet negotiators would not buy them.

The Soviet Union is well aware of what the United States could do should SALT I be abrogated. What makes these agreements work, then, is not a stack of "bargaining chips" but the overall power and potential of each superpower.

President Carter has an opportunity to break cleanly with the unproductive stratagems of his predecessors. He should not base any decisions concerning proposed new weapons on their putative value as "bargaining chips." And before any weapon is tested, he should assess its potential impact on arms control.

Congress created the legal structure for such an assessment two years ago; so all requests for nuclear weapons must now be accompanied by "arms control impact statements." The Ford administration, however, made a mockery of the process. Its entire discussion of the impact of the air-launched cruise missile ran just two sentences. The sea-launched cruise missile, which would have an appreciably different impact on the arms race, was disposed of with the same two sentences. The Arms Control and Disarmanent Agency, which was established to counterpoise the Department of Defense, supinely acquiesced in the Pentagon's handiwork.

Even if the Backfire and cruise missile disputes are resolved, a SALT II treaty will not end superpower competition. "The irony," Mondale said in a speech last summer, "is that in all probability even a good agreement based on Vladivostok will not put much of a dent in the arms race because those guidelines are inherently limited. They would leave forces on both sides at an extraordinarily high level and, worse, permit and even encourage continued growth in their destructive power." Can *qualitative* restraints be negotiated to preclude the development of weapons of mass destruction conceptually different from those in present arsenals? Can multilateral arms control be negotiated between East and West Europe? Can the spread of nuclear weapons be prevented? A successful SALT II treaty will not address these questions; yet they cannot be addressed until the two superpowers have ended their bilateral arms race.

**Peter J. Ognibene**

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# Epistle of a Gentile to Saul Bellow

*Dear Mr. Bellow:*

The reason why I write in this manner will be obvious enough. You would regard it as rather absurd if I said that yours is the "best" book about Israel: what would *that* be? There can't be a kind of Critics' Choice of the Ten Best Books on such a subject. What is more interesting is how many of the books on Israel are remarkable. Your response to your journey is so personal that it is difficult not to respond as personally in return. You say of Joseph Alsop's open letter to Amos Eron that your first reaction was that "a personal letter is sent directly to one's friend, not published in the papers." I can be excused on that ground: we have met from time to time over the past 10 years, but I am not a friend. An open letter merely seems to me the most appropriate way of discussing the kind of questions you have raised in my mind. Indeed, one of those questions is disturbing in itself: should everyone's response to Israel, "for" it or "against" it, be as personal as it usually seems to be.

It was only as I read your book that I became intrigued by your title: *To Jerusalem and Back*. And back: why the emphasis? You would not go to Venice and write a book called *To Venice and Back*. "This, then, is what I bring to Chicago on our return," you say. But you would not have made so much of the fact that you had returned if you had been to Johannesburg. Perhaps an American black writer might go to Africa, and on his return write a book called *To Accra and Back*; and as he would be writing as an American black, so you are writing as an American Jew.

When you get back to Chicago, you seem almost to



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put on your own skin again: "And here it is again—same conditions, same questions and challenges as before, same carpets, books, sticks of furniture." As you wait for the kettle to boil in the morning, and switch on the radio, outside is the Tribune Tower. There is Chicagoland, and how enduring you make it sound, after where we have been with you. "I know how to warm my spirits in this town."

We have been with you before as you waited for the kettle to boil, but then it was in Jerusalem: "Double window shades don't keep out the morning light. It wakes me and I go to fill the kettle." And you "look across the Gai-Hinnom to Mount Zion," and then you "go to the door and look toward the Judean Desert. I see not so much a terrain as the form of some huge being." You even "feel that I can *hear* Mount Zion as well as see it," and you contemplate; until at last you "close the door on Mount Zion, and go upstairs to the reception desk to get the morning papers . . . I descend to the flat to see what has become of the Dutch hostages, the British hostages, and of the Lebanese, the Portuguese, the Angolans."

Waiting for the kettle to boil back in Chicago, you listen to the news among the "commercials for Peking duck and French 'fondoo' dishes, and the names of wines, together with all of the world's disasters and outrages," and to "what all the announcers refer to as 'cultural programming,' sponsored by wine and cheese shops, by hi-fi shops, and by ethnic restaurants," and always outside there is Chicagoland and the Tribune Tower with a facade that "contains fragments of the Acropolis, the Pyramids, the Great Wall of China, the Roman Coliseum, and of famous cathedrals and palaces: the Colonel's Tower incorporates, consummates, and transcends them all." As I say, how enduring it sounds.

You hoof it down to the Eagle, soon after your return, to have a drink with a colleague: a storefront bar with its "New Deal mementos and photographs of film stars"; and I felt a shock as I checked in my mind that the New Deal is older than the country where you have been. How enduring those photographs of film stars; but what will endure where you went? To Jerusalem—and back. Your two flights, east and west, are like poles to your book: on your way east, the encounter with the Hasid who offered you $25 a week for life if you promised to eat only kosher food; on your return, since it is a Saturday, "there are no Hasidim," only the Alps to look at, and Ruskin to think of, until you are at last in "London's domestic, comfortable gloom, good therapy for perturbed spirits." And again how enduring you make "wintry England, dark green and parklike" seem after where you were. Even there, *you are back.*

I think this is important: that as an American Jew you went to another place. You have relatives in Israel and friends galore—what relatives! what friends!—but they inhabit another place, and it is as another place that it must be seen and recognized for what it is, and that ultimately the reason must be found for defending it. Not for a moment does your Jewishness drop away from you, but neither does your Americanness; and in this there lies, I think, the expected but still achieved integrity of your book. Why Israel should matter to a Jew is one subject; why it should matter to an American Jew is another; but the question on which you bear is why it should matter to our civilization, from the Alps to London, to Chicago to Stanford, where you go when you are back.

You are American and a Jew, I am British and a Gentile; but we are all also history, so to speak, as well as autobiography. We have all encountered "the grotesque fake importance of great national events," as William Stafford describes them (I am quoting only from memory) in one of his poems: what you call "politics," to which I will come. We have been part of them, and they have become part of us. I cannot shrug off the fact that as a prep school boy I "committed" myself to Haile Selassie, or that I was later committed with more meaning to the creation of the state of Israel.

I was just down from Oxford, employed by the *Manchester Evening News*, the evening paper of the *Manchester Guardian*, and let loose to write its editorials, almost without direction. The *Manchester Guardian* was then the most pro-Zionist paper in Britain—except for the *Manchester Evening News*, while my youthful zeal was allowed to outdo the parent paper.

Manchester. What a grimy bombed-out place it was after the war. There were holes everywhere, empty shells of bombed buildings, and gaping lots where wild flowers grew, where they had not grown for a hundred years. I loved its griminess, and the Gothic Revival in England means to me the blackened buildings in the commercial cities of Northern England and the Black Country. And there in Manchester in the 19th century they had built a university that was blackened when I knew it, where they taught things like chemistry, which we tried to avoid noticing at Oxford. And in that university there was a great chemist called Chaim Weizmann. And in Manchester they elected Arthur Balfour, the author of the Balfour Declaration, and on the edges of the city they elected also Winston Churchill, the most formidable supporter of the Declaration. And in the city there was the most identifiable and gifted Jewish community in the whole of Britain, in which the Laskis were only one of the sports. And there I went to a Jewish dentist, the father of a friend at Oxford and a leader of the Zionists, who leaned over me with his pincers: "If you switch your line on Palestine, I'll make this hurt next time."

But I needed no threat or cajoling. The creation of the state of Israel seemed to me right at the time, even while Jewish terrorists were blowing up British soldiers. It was not simple to take and sustain such a



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position. It made my newspaper unpopular in the city. People do not like their soldiers being blown up by terrorists. But it seemed to me an issue that allowed no equivocation, and to this day I am convinced that the creation of Israel was then necessary, and that its defense is now even more necessary, for reasons beyond those of strategic interest.

Does that mean that I am speaking from a prejudice? I do not think so. I have examined my position on Israel many times over the years, when Israel has been victorious in battle as well as when it has been thwarted, since I wish to feel that so strong a conviction can be reasonably supported; and it is a compliment to your book that it jarred me into thinking about it all over again.

If my memory is not playing me false, I think that those editorials between 1946 and 1948 in the *Manchester Evening News* would show that the holocaust in Europe was the least of my reasons for arguing for the creation of Israel. It was not guilt for what my civilization had perpetrated or permitted, nor even a desire to find a home for the survivors, that moved me to so uncompromising a conviction. If that was all, then I am not sure that today that would be enough of a reason to argue for the defense of Israel. Give them Utah! Give them Uganda, as indeed was once proposed! If the fact that the Jews have been among the casualties of history were the only argument, then the Palestinians today are also casualties with something of a case: a case against the Jews.

There is something other to Israel than that, which is not spelled out, at least not in the newspapers or on television, for the ordinary person—especially the ordinary Gentile—to grasp and so supply his conviction. It is very much because of this that some critics have said that you do not supply any "answers" in your book. They want instant "answers" from their politicians, which is bad enough; now they want them also from their writers. Elipses seems no longer to be appreciated. Yet as much by elipsis as by explicit statement, your book raised in my mind again the question that matters: what would we irrevocably lose without Israel, which we cannot afford to lose?

For example, what is the importance of anti-Semitism in our decision on this issue? I am not sure that I really met a Jew until I came to America. The Jew in the professional middle class in which I was raised in England was so assimilated that he was not recognizable. Of course I was aware that there were Jews, in places like Swiss Cottage and Golders Green, but we thought of these suburbs as colonies, beneficently governed like others in the British Empire. I knew also that there were working-class Jews in the East End, in places like Bethnal Green, who did things like tailoring and (of course) panicked when the bombs fell. But one did not really *know* the working class. There were Jews at school, but again one did not notice them as Jews unless they were also foreign, refugees from Hitler. Were there Jews at Oxford? There must have been, but the only one I remember was my girl friend, Gitta Blumenthal (fond memory), whose Jewishness was kept firmly in the background: after all, she *was* at Lady Margaret Hall.

It is important to emphasize that this environment was not one of virulent anti-Semitism. Simply, the Jews who were a part of one's life were not talked about; at least not as Jews. One might have a friend who was a Jew, but one did not have a Jew who was a friend; and this tacitness created a barrier more difficult to pass than open anti-Semitism might have done.

Passing it had to be conscious. One evening at Oxford, when I had gone to London for the day and returned by train, which was late and crowded and dirty like all trains during the war, I threw myself into a friend's room in my college. When asked what my journey had been like, I answered almost casually: "Oh! the usual. Everyone pushing to get on the train, and of course a lot of Jewish women got all the seats." I paused, then broke my own silence: "That is a lie. I'm not sure if I saw one Jewish woman on the platform, let alone one Jewish woman get a seat." My friends seemed to think that I was being over-conscientious, but when one breaks a barrier like that, at the age of 20, one does not forget it afterward; and I still regard anti-Semitism as something bred into a Gentile of my civilization, against which correction is sometimes needed.

The point which I draw from my English experience is this: in a society where Jews are not seen, too often one sees them when they are not there, getting seats on crowded trains. (In Poland, where there are almost no Jews, there is still a most vicious anti-Semitism.) To meet the self-affirming Jew, really for the first time, in America has helped—not merely to illuminate my own past, but to clarify the reasons why I feel so strongly about Israel. I am not the first to say that there would be "anti-Semitism" in our civilization even if there were no Jews. As with myself, anti-Semitism is most sedulous when it is directed against the Jews who are not there. It is also most sedulous when it is not virulent. And it reflects a need of our civilization—this is something with which it is very uncomfortable to come to grips.

You approach this need from time to time, as when you say, "At times I suspect that the world would be glad to see the last of its Christianity, and that it is the persistency of the Jews that prevents it," recalling the remark of Jacques Maritain that European anti-Semitism in our century is an attempt to get rid of the moral burden of Christianity.

Returning to my autobiography, I have something else to suggest. The Jews were at the founding of western civilization, before any others: we call it the Hebrew-Hellenic-Christian civilization, in that order;

*(continued on page 22)*



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# British Anti-Semitism, Then and Now

Britain's primary distraction from its real problems over the past few months has been the publication of a biography of a woman who died more than 25 years ago. The controversy surrounding David Pryce-Jones's *Unity Mitford: A Quest* has been a classic British brouhaha, possible only in a country where the political, social and literary elites are thoroughly intertwined. The subject, too, is classically British: upper-class, anti-Semitism, then and now.

Unity Valkyrie Mitford was a charter member of what Orwell called the "functionless class"; a cousin of Winston Churchill and the daughter of Lord Redesdale (a man who once proclaimed that the abolition of the House of Lords would "undermine the foundations of Christianity"), Unity traded her insular life of tea parties and talk for the chance to march with the modern men of her time. In 1933, at the age of 19, Unity joined the British Union of Fascists. She spent a great deal of time in Germany and, after much effort, was actually picked up by Hitler in a Munich restaurant in 1935—her dream come true. The debutante and the dictator soon became close friends and companions. She appeared with Hitler at all five of the annual Nuremburg rallies; sometimes she was photographed in her fascist shirt and gauntlets, flanked by storm troopers. She wore swastikas that Hitler had given her to society functions in London. She would describe at length to reporters her refined hatred of the Jews. As war finally approached in September of 1939, Unity walked out of the apartment Hitler had given her—a place where she slept on a macabre altar with two huge Nazi flags draped over her pillows—went into the English Gardens in Munich, and shot herself in the head. She remained an invalid until her death in 1948.

Pryce-Jones's book is more than a chronicle of a pitiful fanatic; it is also a revealing reflection upon the class that produced a Unity. The portrait of Unity's family and friends depicts a segment of the upper class that still exists. Pryce-Jones shows them as cold and frivolous—nothing new there—but he also shows them toying with fascism and nazism. Unity would be 62 today, so many of her contemporaries are still around. Pryce-Jones seems to have interviewed most of the living individuals who had anything to do with Unity. Mary Ormsby-Gore, for instance, the sister of Lord Harlech, the former ambassador to Washington and great friend of the Kennedys, is only one of the British notables who speaks at length in the book about the girl they all called "Bobo": "We were all rather ashamed of her," Mrs. Ormsby-Gore states in the book.

Many well connected individuals decided on the basis of advance copies of Pryce-Jones's manuscript that an extended discussion of Unity Mitford's relationship with Hitler and thus, indirectly, of the British aristocracy's relationship to fascism certainly was not in their interest. Consequently, a group of them decided to suppress the book. As early as June, several months before the book was scheduled to appear, publisher Lord George Weidenfeld was receiving letters from lawyers advising him not to produce the book. George Weidenfeld, a close friend of former Prime Minister Harold Wilson, has only been a lord for a few months. When many of the people who were putting pressure on Weidenfeld were attending parties with Unity Mitford in the '30s, Weidenfeld was in the process of fleeing Vienna to escape nazism.

In late September, the man who had been coordinating the attack on the book came out of exile in Paris and held court in London's Savoy Hotel. He was Sir Oswald Mosley, probably the last living relic of the '30s vintage of fascism. As head of the British Union of Fascists, Mosley had commanded the infamous Blackshirts of pre-war England. Unity Mitford always had called him "the Leader." Mosley had married Diana Mitford, Unity's sister, in a secret ceremony held in Germany in 1936. Frau Goebbels played *Yenta* and Hitler was in attendance. Sir Oswald and his wife were eventually interned in Holloway prison for much of the war. Historians from right to left have conceded his brilliance. A.J.P. Taylor (David Pryce-Jones's tutor at Oxford) has said that "in his own mind, he has always been the superman of Nietzsche's vision—the dictator who walked alone." Yet for all of his disgrace, Mosley remains today an aristocrat's aristocrat.

When the book appeared despite the efforts of Mosley and his friends to suppress it, it was greeted by some of the most personally vituperative reviews in years. Lord Antony Lambton was the 6th Earl of Durham until he renounced his title in order to enter the House of Commons, and was forced to resign from the last Tory government because of an affair with a call-girl. He is a friend of the Mitford family. Lambton wrote that Pryce-Jones is "a little white knight in armour, the champion of the Jewish nation, persecuted, because he was attempting to show that the British upper class and Miss Mitford in particular influenced Hitler in his massacre of the Jews." Lambton called the book, "a shocking betrayal of the dignity and moderation with which the Jewish race reacted to their terrible suffering . . . ."

Oswald Mosley had two personal reasons for wanting to suppress or at least discredit the book. The first and most obvious is the fact that the book reveals how very close his wife, Diana, was to Hitler. The second reason is that Pryce-Jones includes in his book a telegram that Mosley sent to Nazi gauleiter Julius Streicher, one of Hitler's rampaging anti-Semites. After a speech in England in April 1935, in which Mosley again denounced "the great Jewish interests in this country," Streicher sent Mosley his congratulations. Mosley replied on 9 May:

> *I value your advice greatly in the midst of our hard struggle. The power of Jewish corruption must be destroyed in all countries before peace and justice can be successfully achieved in Europe. Our struggle to this end is hard, but our victory is certain.*

Mosley has always contended that he had no quarrel with Jews as such; the telegram tends to obliterate this contention. Pryce-Jones and Mosley met on BBC television to debate the book. Mosley called the book "260 pages of tedious trivial gossip." He reiterated his contention that there was nothing anti-Semitic about the British Union of Fascists. "Unity *was* anti-Semitic," he said, but the man who used to say that "The Jew hates fascism like the burglar hates the policemen," contended that his thinking never resembled Unity's. As to "Jewish corruption" he said, "I define Jewish corruption as the use of money power to promote a world war—and even today I cannot give a better description of corruption."

David Pryce-Jones, a *New Republic* contributor who writes novels as well as serious journalism, says that he decided to write about Unity because it seemed to be a good story. A tall, blond, Aryan of an upper-class British girl towering over Adolf Hitler, following him everywhere; he played Donald DeFreeze to her Patty Hearst. Some Britons apparently regard the whole affair as yet another impetuous onslaught against the most persecuted of minorities, the British upper class.

**Donald R. Katz**

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and of that civilization, Israel is the last outpost. Here is where my perspective may be suggestively different from yours. Britain and France scooped up the Middle East at the end of World War I, the last addition to their colonial empires at the very moment when they no longer had the strength or the will to sustain these empires. Forget the French—you are very funny, and with point, about the French!—for Palestine itself was a British mandate, just as the Balfour Declaration was a British state document. Pinned on these two horns, the attitude of the British was unlike that of anyone else.

Your own book is, in one of its aspects, a prolonged, complex and fascinating dialogue between all that we still call western civilization, and that strange outpost of it, Israel, stuck down in the middle of what we now call the third world. The dialogue is made even more fascinating, of course, because of the immense contributions to Israel of East Europeans and Asians and most recently North Africans, the vast number of Jews from the Arab countries. Yet in spite of those contributions, Israel was a deliberate offshoot of western values and ideas, owing its existence to the ardor of Jews, but in terms of the support of great powers, to America and Britain. It was born of the same impulse that already had carried western civilization around the world, often to interrupt rudely the ways of life that had existed for centuries.

In one paragraph one may summarize the meaning of that impulse. Until the 16th century, the various civilizations of the world had existed more or less apart. Western civilization then found the still unparalleled energy to spread itself across the world, until by the beginning of our own century it had "conquered" every other civilization on the earth. The real source of this energy was its natural science, meaning also its philosophy, and technology that grew out of it. But the west carried with it the restlessness of its ideas: liberty and equality, the nation and the state. What is more, it is with these ideas, brought by the west, that the rest of the world has revolted against it: the third world today uses against the west the ideas of the west, ideas unknown to it before the west came. As Marx said of British rule in India, it broke up "the stagnation of centuries."

How wretched western civilization looked in 1945; and how unpromising the rest of the world seemed without its inspiration. There seemed only three reasons to hope: the first was America, to which Europe looked then with a still bright longing; the second was what was then generally called "democratic socialism," which had held up its head with honor against both Stalin and Hitler; and the third was Israel. You have to believe that I am not speaking only for myself; and of course you do not have to believe only me, for it is in every memoir that touches on the birth of Israel. It is in Amos Elon's remarkable book, *The Israelis*, and it is in your own work. Israel was to be a shining example of western social democracy at its best.

But Israel was not founded as a colony. It began at once as a new nation with its own life. This is what is most awkward about it today to many people. The old empires can withdraw from their colonies in Africa and Asia, Latin American and the Caribbean, but how can the west withdraw from part of itself that was never a colony? What can the relationship of the west be to one of its own sovereign nations, whose entire populace, unlike that of South Africa, supports and participates in its established—and surviving—western manner of government?

Here is my answer to the first of the questions which your book provoked in me. The responses to Israel amongst people of the west have to be as personal as they are, because we are being asked how much we now care for our civilization in one of its periods of agitation and doubt. As no one else I know, you force the dialogue between that civilization and its child.

Again and again, the question of the "struggle for existence" is brought to the fore in your conversations: the dialogue between a civilization in which the "struggle for existence" is apparently over, and a western nation that is every day struggling to exist. Hence the power of the contrast between Chicagoland and Jerusalem, between your thoughts on the two occasions when you wait for the kettle to boil. The accusation of many Israelis against the west is that it has lost the will to survive. This question of will is crucial in my own response. At the end of World War II, when he was Viceroy of India, Lord Wavell sent an extraordinary letter to George VI, in which he said that Britain could "hold" India with comparatively little expenditure of energy or resources, but that the *will at the center* had gone. Through so many of your conversations with Israelis I heard that phrase: the will at the center has gone.

And of course when Israel has exerted that will on its own behalf—in the Six Days' War, and at Entebbe—one has heard all about one the sigh of our civilization that it had lost such a will. After all, what was the cause of the fiasco at Suez but the collapse of the will of the west, when the Suez Canal, as Anthony Eden's wife put it, seemed to be "flowing through the drawing room" of No. 10 Downing Street, and when John Foster Dulles (lo and behold!) for the first time took the United States into alliance with the Soviet Union, against America's allies in Western Europe?

Nothing is more interesting—and some doctoral candidate needing a subject for his thesis might document it for us—than the whoop of pride and joy which carried 'round the west during the Six Days' War, then to be followed by an almost immediate repulsion of informed opinion in the west against Israel. There seem to me to be three obvious explanations of this: the excessive guilt of the west at its own colonial record; the guilt of the west that it has lost its own will; and the guilt of the west at its own



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security.

As I say, one of the ideas that the west has carried to the world is that of the nation, and hence of the state, to replace the tribal societies, or the community of the Church, or the arrangements of feudalism, or the empires of the past, all of which subjected the individual in a way in which the western idea of the nation-state does not. One of the values of your book is the impression that you give, as you move from friend to friend, stranger to stranger, experience to experience, of the sheer existence of Israel as nation, after so short a history. These are people whom one cannot imagine anywhere else, wherever they came from in the first place, and even, to some extent, no matter how recently they came. *In this context*, you are not describing Jews, although Jews they most wonderfully and sometimes even crazily sound like. You are describing Israelis, who are made one by their allegiance to a state.

"There was now a state," says Elon of Israel in 1967, "whatever the argument over Zionism." Some people find this hard to stomach. A state! All that we have been taught to fear. Until we think of Israel, we are tempted to think of the nation-state as a perverse oddity in what is represented as the more genial history of mankind before it was so subdivided. We would much rather think of "peoples" or "cultures" or "languages" or "religions" or "traditions," but your description of individuals in Israel helps us to see how all of these can be sharpened because a state encompasses them. *To Jerusalem*—another nation, that is the point—*and Back*.

The Jew who is not in Israel is right when he says that if Israel were suddenly not there, the position of the Jews in the rest of the world would again be scary. But that is not my point here. The whole of our civilization, with all the baggage of its history, needs Israel if it is to shift its "anti-Semitism" away from a particular people. The Jew must be made visible elsewhere, so that we don't find him where he is not, and the only place where we can make him visible, East European or Asian or North African, is in his own nation-state. If America does not ensure the survival of Israel, the American people will endure a despondency of spirit beside which their defeat in Vietnam will appear as one restless night: not merely because Americans helped to create the nation, but because *the invisible Jew* would once again be on their backs. The Jew has to have a nation, in order for us not to see him where he is not.

Finally, all of this can be brought to focus in your attitude toward politics: politics in its large sense, its majestic sense, which can order to kill or to die, enable a nation to survive or to vanish. (It is important to remember that nations do vanish.) Throughout your book, you talk ambivalently of politics. On the plane you immerse yourself in "mere politics." Perhaps as a poet Osip Mandelstam was able to "reach to the heart of politics." The two poets in Jerusalem with whom you spend a day released you "from weeks of preoccupation with . . . . the butcher problems of politics." In the "consummate mildness" of the climate in Jerusalem, you feel "the contrast between politics and peace." And so I could go on, quoting some of your most striking observations.

You are alert to politics; you do not disdain it, anymore than would Solzhenitsyn; you are not sentimental in your affright from its "butcher problems"; you search out the newspapers each morning, to read at politics. I think that this is not merely an important part of your own attitude (which is of course evident in the main body of your work, with its constant determination to try to relate individuals to their societies), but at least a clue to the secret for which we are looking: the ultimate conviction within ourselves that the defense of Israel is a moral imperative from which we cannot escape without a moral disaster for our civilization from which we would never recover.

Our western societies are ultimately acceptable, and capable of demanding from us the highest loyalties, because they are political. Hitler was not politics, Stalin was not politics; they were the abandonment of it. I think that I, and many like me, loved Israel before it existed because it was born of politics. The whole Zionist movement from the beginning was wordy as only politics can be. Words upon words, resolutions upon resolutions, sects upon sects, fissures upon fissures: that has been Zionism, as it is also now Israel. I disagree with Amos Elon, for example, when he emphasizes the "utopian" inclinations of Russian and East European Jews of the 19th century. There was something extraordinarily political about them, as they scurried about writing their words and forming their parties.

The Zionist movement did not hesitate to humiliate Chaim Weizmann at one point; Chaim Weizmann did not hesitate to fight back and reestablish himself. And so it continues inside Israel today, in circumstances that are testing and even appalling, in a way in which it does not go on in India—that other great hope as a demonstration of the gifts of western social democracy. Just as the Zionist movement was like one enormous parliament, so do all the individuals in your book sound like that: noisy and rambunctious and alive. This the west: "arguing the toss," as we say in England, about matters large and small, even as it must sometimes feed bullets into its guns. To me, it is not so much a question of where would the Jew go, but where in its moral imagination can the west go to find the meaning of its still sweeping material power and intellectual energy.

And there in Israel are these people who have chosen, for a mixture of motives, never to write "*and Back*" at the end of a title, and so I go back where I began. It is the integrity reflected in your title that gives your book the power of individual art.

**Henry Fairlie**



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# Arts & Lives

## Stanley Kauffmann on theater

### Musicals by Women

*Nightclub Cantata* (Top of the Gate). Anyone in New York or elsewhere who saw Andrei Serban's productions of three Greek plays, called *Trilogy*, has heard the music of Elizabeth Swados. (*TNR*, Nov. 23, '74.) It was wonderful. It ranged from primally exciting percussions to the lyric swell of a desolate chorus. *The Trojan Women* was subtitled "An Epic Opera," and if opera means music and theater united to approximate Athenian tragedy—which is why opera was invented—then the name was not misapplied.

Swados is now all of 25. (Some will wonder about her relation to the late Harvey Swados: second cousin.) After other work with Serban on Brecht's *Good Woman of Setzuan*—and she had worked with Peter Brook before Serban—she has now made a production of her own. It's unique, lovely and endearing.

And very hard to describe. Description, we've been told, is the bedrock of criticism. Well, *Nightclub Cantata* can be described: as a collection of 20 numbers. The term "cantata" is a loose one anyway, but Swados' work is even looser—in convention. The 20 pieces, not one with a really memorable tune, are performed in a cabaret by eight people (herself included), a pianist and a percussionist, in ensemble, solos, and differing combinations. But then I must describe the disparity of the songs. Five of them have words by Swados. Others have words by a number of poets including a Turk named Nazim Hikmet. Some lines of a few songs are in Hebrew. Two numbers, "Bird Chorus" and "Bird Lament" are non-verbal, only sounds. Swados does the latter as a solo. It's an enchanting piece: not whistlings but throated warblings, flutings, trillings, and owl cries, arranged in stanzaic form. It's extremely difficult to perform, I should think, quarter tones being the easiest part of it, and marvelous to hear.

And *then* I must describe the unity of this same seeming ragbag of pieces. Style is the key. Swados staged the production herself and has made the best possible use of an eccentric space: a small platform with an alcove behind it, snuggled into the angle of an L, which is how this cabaret is shaped. She also moves her people through the audience as far as is helpful. Speech of joyous clarity and fine emotional candor are what lift these songs and pieces to a plane of intense *address*—a style that would be impossible for most singers but not for actors who can sing. Often the group bites out words in unison: sometimes a pair reply to one another with almost demonic vigor. The inspiration behind the sound of this cantata is the work that Serban (presumably with Swados' help) accomplished with his actors: the senstation that a flood of sound is pouring forth from the innards and is being shaped into precise language: to put it emblematically, a combination of heart and head. The beauty of the diction is part of the beauty of the song. It's not elocutionary, it's sculptural.

The exception to the multifarious unity of the evening is the one funny number, at which I laughed but which I nevertheless wish had been omitted. "The Pastrami Brothers," done by the four men in old-style costumes, is a parody of an acrobatic act in which there is a lot of springing into position and "Hup!" and bracing, with a ludicrous payoff to each portentous preparation. Parody is not the point of the evening, even in the affectionately mocking rock number "Indecision," and the fact that this acrobat number is not musical makes it even more egregious.

Cabaret shows in our culture have come to mean, usually, either political satire or various forms of sexual confession. This show has none of the former and little of the latter. There is no one theme: the songs range from the wry, subtly dense despair of Delmore Schwartz ("In Dreams Begin Responsibilities") to the pleasant flutings of Frank O'Hara ("To the Harbormaster"). Binding all together is the sheer relish of Feeling: exultation in response to the stimuli of the world, darker or brighter stimuli, pride in being a human who can have this range of response.

Yet *Nightclub Cantata* is spheres away from "commune" soppiness. If you saw Alain Tanner's recent film *Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000*, you will recognize how opposed this show is. Tanner's picture, skillfully made, is drenched in fellow-feeling-as-politics, the implicit dictum that "we deserve to inherit the world because we eat health foods and screw freely." Swados believes in discipline: in fellow-feeling as the impulse and end of intelligence and dignity. No lolling communard could do those bird calls, could inspire a group to the precision reached here. Feeling starts it, as it does all art, but goes through an arduous process before it comes out as good feeling again. There is an ethics in this production.

Other than Swados, I knew only two of the performers. Diminutive Shelley Plimpton, who was the permanent waif in *Hair*, curlicues affectingly here again. JoAnna Peled, who was excellent in *Trilogy* in Helen of Troy and other roles, is excellent again. Her song and dance "The Gypsy" takes the familiar Carmen sex-as-banner rubric and makes it fresh. All the others are good. William Milhizer is a deft percussionist (which, with Swados, means more than drums), and Judith Fleisher is the exceptionally sensitive pianist. (Fleisher, says the program, is a resident psychologist at the Bronx Psychiatric Center.)

"Cantata" is an inadequate tag for this work, except in the literal meaning of "a sung piece." Through the 1960s, Al Carmines of the Judson Church in New York did shows called cantatas or oratorios, that were collections of musical numbers meant to hold an audience through their theatrical effect as much as their musical appeal. A Carmines highpoint was his setting of quotations from Chairman Mao's Little Red Book for various combinations of voices—music that had vaudeville, jazz, ragtime as its sources. Swados' music is,

*(continued on page 38)*

### Films Worth Seeing

*The Last Tycoon*. Robert De Niro's romantic-ruthless performance is the chief reason to see this fuddling of Fitzgerald.

*Mikey and Nicky*. Elaine May's black-comic plunge into the underworld. Utterly nasty but minor Céline.

*Network*. Everything you've always known about TV, hyped up amusingly. All the sparkle and value of a zircon.

*The Seven-per-cent Solution*. Fine fun. Sherlock Holmes meets Sigmund Freud, and why ever not? Excellent cast.

**SK**



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# Poetry in History

*Here are seven poems chosen from among submissions to* The New Republic. *They share a certain intensity or pitch of comprehension, and in several this is historical. Alun Lewis, invoked in the first poem, died in combat in World War II; the poem conveys an emotion proper to that occasion and that kind of death, undislodgeable from present memory. "Moloch's Place" is a place achieved in pure poetry for what was the place in history of the "final solution" to which this or any other way of calling things is inadequate. "Olive Tree, First Pilgrim" meditates upon it in ancient terms and an ancient landscape. Placed against it here, again in "nature," are frail powers: the fantasy-building power in "Skyscape," and the power of serene waking-and-being in "Intimation." The two incantatory, rushing sonnets of the next poem echo "metaphysical" modes in a rapt and barely coherent spiritual statement. "The Sorrowful Mysteries" is a Lenten poem on the named episodes in the Passion (the suffering) of Christ.* —R. F.

## For Alun Lewis (1915-44)

An elegy before a lovesong
suits this commonplace passion.
The neck of the sack is broken,
your skin still warm.

Beneath a dumb umbrella
washes the name of your body.
I become the quarry
my eyes have swollen.

It is not enough to mourn
a mindless equation.
I know nothing of you
conscious and shaven.

I listen to the bullet
pass through your future skin
and run with my mouth blown open.

*Elisabeth Murawski Evans*

## Moloch's Place

Simoon—sand-wind of madness—
a bellows
on the campfires

of the Sephardim: each spark
is a no one
dying

each child
a galaxy
of ash

if you climb the silence
of the Moors
strangers will tell you your names

Quixote
sane at last
fingerpainting with blood

remember
when they come for you
how they call things in this place

*Tom Jones*


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# Olive Tree, First Pilgrim

"Desolation . . . as when an olive tree is beaten and stripped . . ."
—*Isaiah*

## 1

Ash has settled upon
your green with such fidelity:
you
will never be
quit of mourning.

## 2

Olive tree, first pilgrim:
not the Jebusite, nor
the Girgushite, nor the
Perrizite could rout you.
You stuck and multiplied.
Today, throughout the land,
on terraced hillsides,
in swath of *wadi*, on
the streets of Jerusalem,
you greet me, blind-eyed.
Friend! Lovingly I caress
your twisted hairshirt
bark, find solace in your
tiny-leafed shade.
Almost
you squat, begging with
all of your limbs.
Should you be denied?

## 3

Olive tree, friend,
desist from your
begging
I pray you
on the Sabbath.

## 4

I met a stump of
an olive tree and
it spoke to me:

"They lopped my branches
and sawed me through,
but see how I
am starting anew:
Where I was cleaved,
I'm earthen gray and
stone to the touch;
a shoot grows from
my side like a rib,
and tiny leaves are
sprouting as once.
My roots are wide
and strong and deep,
they hold like claws
to earth and stone
from an ancient time.
But time is here
and time is clear,
and that is why
I cannot die.

"If you wish, I
am Christ himself
for those who believe
in the Resurrection;
but perhaps I'm even
more His people
who perished in
millions as One."

*Etta Blum*

# Intimation

It says what you've always known
even as a child
when your grandmother sat on your bed in the dark
and sang that tuneless song
about a white goat and raisins and almonds
and you felt suddenly strange:
as though you had waked in the night and snow was falling.

*Katha Pollitt*



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# Skyscape

The entire morning drew my gaze
I saw no one I knew
not clouds but human shapes
a battalion of statues darkening the sky

These were presences to weigh harshly
against the unprotected eye
but there was no harm to them
no terror to their infinite calm

I saw no one I knew

I saw everyone:
men who were granite columns,
women in an ecstasy of white marble,
children dwarfed by seraphims' wings

Stately and inhuman as clouds
white and smooth and perfect
all those stony brows
those egg-like sightless eyes

Their muscled flesh is prodigious
and uncontaminated by the heat of our blood
warriors, gargoyles, horses, women
who have borne stone children out of their stony loins

Oblivious of our worship and our dread
they pass in their methodical calm
they are ruthless in beauty
massive, perfect, moon-pale, merely rock

*Joyce Carol Oates*

# The Imitation of Death

tell me, dear mindmate, what you see in me
to knot your eyes to the same beam as my eyes,
hold me as your target, fasten my sight your prize,
so rivet me, to the death, in what you see?
why, you can see nothing more. blind but for me/
i am your world, your vision, and devise
except for your sight of me your seeing dies.
so in my life your life is what you see.
and when i lie you lie, when i wake to rise
i walk imprisoned in tunnels of your eyes
and see myself live through your sight of me.
and when, in this glass, this glass corpse crucifies,
wrists shattered, pierced by nails that are your eyes,
i shall know, not that i feel, but that you see.

how easy to tell you, mindmate, even He
i heard died in earnest on this cross, heard chose
to know the deep bones break open, the ribcage disclose/
crown of the night / how the heart dies on its tree /
i promise you now, in that icon of dying, He
saw no way to shake off this icon of sight, but rose
possessed by that self, carved in blood, weathered in those
who died to hang their hearts from His heart's tree.
what shall i bring back? shall i wake, out of tunneled repose
weighted with earthen death, the way He rose
icon, fable, to mine in blood from the sap of the tree?
i know no Passion. if this grinding down disclose,
eclipsed, crown of the night, as the sun's edge shows
from its night heart, one black drop, my mind might swing free.

*Judith Johnson Sherwin*

# The Sorrowful Mysteries

"La mente, che qui luce, in Terra fuma."
*Paradiso*, Canto 21.

## I. The agony in the Garden

The insatiable soul eats us alive from within.
Where the body was: a Black Hole.

Stripped of illusion and its consolation, vision,
my hollow pain is crow blood black.

Not even the peace that temporary darkness used to fly me to.
The space reserved for silence fills with buzzing.

From my flaming face will the angel rise,
as it rose before my Father?

May I dissolve headfirst to heaven,
free to die into the black space of sleep.

How often we suffer, or cannot suffer: mere ash from our flame!
Yet in art or in the free imagination: flame out of mere dust!



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## II. The scourging at the pillar

As evening vanishes, the full
moon behind tall pines,
the sky whitens like a skull.
As pain and its exhilaration burn
out, exhaustion is a sickness, an acid hum.
But each wound cries, awake! awake!
The *body* is the burden,
each latitude of flesh contains a
thousand lungs of pain,
that rise and fall with the heavy
and mute wings of earth.
This is the avatar of pain!
Incoherent in every cell.
In this dark time, the eye
opens on the measureless air,
the interminable wind,
where nothing is wasted.
In this way the great peace.
At last I am utterly poor.
Take me.

## III. The crowning with thorns

A man who wants to be bishop
delivers advice from the plaza.
The lighting is that of
"June evening in the park"—
everything pale blue, translucent,
and fragrant green.
We are surrounded by children.

The hill over which we are running
keeps recurring. We are breathless
and driven, seeking something
we do not know yet.

This knowledge: mere particles of detail,
tiny shocks and wounds and pointlets of
things briefly understood.

As the park swing reached its apex,
we glimpsed between the ankles of our
suspended childish legs, something
black and rootlike in the distance,
in the early summer evening.
Something fixed, yet deciduous, fugitive.
Between each captured glimpse of knowledge,
we would sink, then rise again with longing.

Beyond that black and winding thing,
perhaps fountains with doves?
Or is it only the cry of the deaf?

## IV. The bearing of the cross

The first thing in us all is the sweetness
of a beast, whose yoke is light, whose
work is sweet.
Looking back, I can take strength
from how my horse could swim.
No saddle, I would trot him
on some civil, vacant shore until
the small waves made us drunk and calm.
And then he would trot *me*,
pretend to break of a sudden for the sea,
leap the shallow foaming rollers,
pump his thin legs through the waters,
swim, and swim—bobbing, drinking air—
dip and dive, a fat brown person
at home in water.
He kept his eyes wide open.
He'd sink me to the chin, and then
would lunge ahead,
the slippery
fragrant mane, and me the light burden
streamlined back from the classic head,
the leader. He was the branch,
and I the flower.
One day we rode, hour upon hour
and soon we were out of sight of land,
skimming the surface of the sea.
We were mindless, faithful, unattached
as any mute life can be.

## V. The crucifixion

The most sorrowful betrayal is from within.
And the true self is with us always:
lighter than air, a shaft of pure light.
Graceful, pale, it is
not what the body is: capable of torment.
The body is like straw, the soul is like straw burning.
The body is a killer, though it must die with you.
But will the body not disown you?
First the clothes are distributed.
Then, where will the thumping
heart go, strong and stringy,
and where the sweet blood?
Where the hair, the helpless hands,
and all the innocent parts, surprisingly heavy,
small thefts from the body's greed?
Where the unfeeling and austere skull?
The true self thirsts unto death
for a future, and therefore
always dies violently,
and rises, light as light.

*Peggy Rizza*



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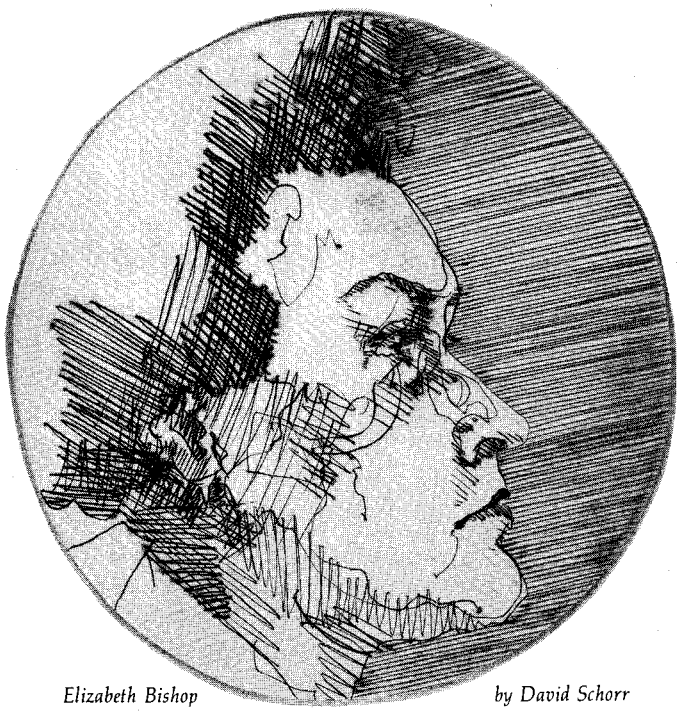

*Elizabeth Bishop* *by David Schorr*

## Geography III by Elizabeth Bishop

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux; $7.95)

This is Elizabeth Bishop's fifth book of poems, and the third to bear a geographical title. Published at the very close of 1976, it forms a grand triad of achievements with Robert Penn Warren's *Selected Poems* and James Merrill's *Divine Comedies*, the two other major books of American poetry during the bicentennial year. Of her own generation of poets, which included Roethke, Lowell, Berryman and Jarrell, Bishop alone seems beyond dispute. As contemporaries, we may over-esteem the others, but Bishop's art is as unmistakable in its authority as the poetry of Wallace Stevens and Marianne Moore demonstrated itself to be, at an earlier time.

There are only 10 poems in *Geography III*, and all of them are successful, on any terms, but two are surprises and may be Bishop's strongest—*Crusoe in England* and *The End of March*. Another, the last one, *Five Flights Up*, is slighter, but seems to me her most poignant poem since the early *The Unbeliever*. Rather than make the attempt to give a general topography of this volume, I prefer to invest my space here in discussing just these three poems, for what is wonderful in them can stand, by synecdoche, for the rest of this beautiful book, and for all of Bishop's work so far. The poet who gave us meditations like *The Monument*, *Roosters*, and *At the Fishhouses*, comparable to the most memorable poems of Frost and Stevens, gives us now work of a curious immediacy, comparable to some of the abrupt lyrics of Dickinson, at nearly their most intense. Where the language of personal loss was once barely suggested by Bishop, it now begins to usurp the meditative voice. An oblique power has been displaced by a more direct one, by a controlled pathos all the more deeply moving for having been so long and so nobly postponed.

*Crusoe in England* begins as a reverie upon the theme of belatedness, with Crusoe recalling his island kingdom as a justified realm of self-pity: "So the more/ pity I felt, the more I felt at home." The catalog of memories becomes a paradigm of every inward person's life, of the discourse with oneself that keeps each of us going. Bishop's obsessive concern with the continuity of discourse as juxtaposed to experiential discontinuity becomes here a glory of overdetermined meaning, the meaning of Crusoe's rich solitude, and then of his communion with Friday, which takes on a strong sexual flavoring. The island (and then Friday) lost, and meaning is lost also: "The knife there on the shelf—/it reeked of meaning, like a crucifix./It lived. How many years did I/beg it, implore it, not to break?/I knew each nick and scratch by heart,/. . .Now it won't look at me at all." This loss of what Walter Benjamin called *aura*, of a quality in what we see that sees back at us, is Bishop's version of the loss of a personal Sublime. Her mastery of what she calls "the art of losing" is now all-but-identified with her mastery of the art of poetry.

This, I think, is the burden of *The End of March*, another great poem of the American shoreline to go with Emerson's *Seashore*, Whitman's *Out of the Cradle . . .* and *As I Ebb'd . . .*, Stevens' *The Idea of Order at Key West*, and Crane's *Voyages I*. Walking a cold and windy beach, the poet confronts two emblems: dog-prints "so big/ they were more like lion-prints," and endless lengths of wet white string, "a kite string?—But no kite." Beyond these puzzlements looms up the goal of the beach-walk, a dubious, crooked box of a house, a phantasmagoria of this poet's desire for solitude, for a life beyond further loss. But the cold wind, and the realization that the house is boarded up, forestall the quest, leading to the poem's astonishing last stanza, a realization of so much in Bishop's work:

*On the way back our faces froze on the other side.*
*The sun came out for just a minute.*
*For just a minute, set in their bezels of sand,*
*the drab, damp, scattered stones*
*were multi-colored,*
*and all those high enough threw out long shadows,*
*Individual shadows, then pulled them in again.*
*They could have been teasing the lion sun,*
*except that now he was behind them*
*—a sun who'd walked the beach the last low tide,*
*making those big, majestic paw-prints,*
*who perhaps had batted a kite out of the sky to play with.*

How can one praise this stanza enough? This is the return of the *aura*, the gain rather than the loss of a personal Sublime. The trope of the lion-sun, magnificent in itself, and charming in its solution of the earlier emblems of



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puzzle, affects us so strongly because the poem, and so much of Bishop's poetry, gives us the necessity of redressing an achieved *poverty*, in Emerson's sense (which was also Stevens') of *imaginative need*. We *need* that trope of the lion-sun, and it is Bishop's authority that she both re-induces the need or limitation in us, and then restitutes the need by her genius for invention, for rhetorical substitution.

*Geography III* ends with *Five Flights Up*, a poem that begins before dawn, and that follows a little dog and a bird as they move from sleep to first waking to play. Dog and bird: "know everything is answered,/all taken care of,/no need to ask again." Against this natural continuity, the poet quietly sets an anguish marked by extraordinary rhetorical decorum: "—Yesterday brought to today so lightly!/(A yesterday I find almost impossible to lift.)" The triumph is in the stance, the stationing of the poet in what she has made into her own language, for though the psychic burden is imposingly heavy, the language is so lightly, so deftly handled as to teach us again Stevens' lesson, that the gaiety of language is our lord.

**Harold Bloom**

*Harold Bloom*'s current books are *Poetry and Repression* (Yale) and *Figures of Capable Imagination* (Seabury). His *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate* (Cornell) will be published in April.

## October Light by John Gardner

(Knopf; $10)

John Gardner is one of the few American novelists who has remained fascinated by the man who acts, who wills one thing intensely enough to get it. A medievalist, Gardner seems to have kept his faith that "except in the life of a hero, the whole world's meaningless." *October Light* is a stunningly written tragicomic novel that searches through the operative myths of national greatness for a surviving American heroism. Sally, an 83-year-old feminist and James, her 70-year-old farmer brother, mirror two heroic strains in the American consciousness, the one intoxicated by progress; the other devoted to the land and deriving its values from the endless repetitions of nature. Belief in progress and change and willingness to work the land opened up the American wilderness. But what happened to these impulses under the press of the civilization they produced?

Gardner's hero and heroine are old-time individualists caught in the world they made. James Page is the Anglo-Saxon hero as a Vermont Yankee. His life with his widowed sister is this concentrated faith: "He knew the world was dark and dangerous. Blame it on the weather. 'Most people believe,' he liked to say 'that any problem in the world can be solved if you know enough; most Vermonters know better.' He'd had one son killed by a fall from the barn roof, another—his first born and chief disappointment—by suicide. He'd lost, not long after that, his wife . . . he was better than most men at taking [death] in stride . . . he understood what with stony-faced wit he called 'life's gravity,' understood the importance of admitting it, confronting it head on, with the eyes locked open and spectacles in place . . . . All life—man, animal, bird or flower—is a brief and hopeless struggle against the pull of the earth."

Sally rebels against the pull of her fate, her age, her sex. This WASP as yankee princess has never had children, has gone travelling with her generous, quiet husband, tried her hand at business and become a Democrat in Republican Vermont. But she feels cheated, resenting her lack of sexual opportunities, her husband's silences and the weight of everything she didn't do. She sympathizes with every underdog, every kind of trendiness and every liberal cause. She is in love with the action-packed world that shines from her color TV. Finding her *in flagrante delicto* with its values, James shoots the TV through its glassy face. When she defends the Equal Rights Amendment, James is furious and chases her up to her room with a stick. There she stays to assert (as the book-jacket insists in the spirit that brought us bicentennial lawnmowers) her inalienable right to free speech.

"The hero is he who is immovably centered," wrote Emerson. Gardner's heroes are intractable curmudgeons. James rigs up a gun in a web of string to fire on Sally if she leaves her room. Sally rigs up an apple crate to fall on James if he comes into it. Heroic in their determination not to lose to the other, they are willing to fight to the finish. Who is right? It doesn't matter. Gardner's hero-worship is not for the legitimacy of anyone's cause. The point of the heroic *à la* Gardner is not to stand for what is right, but simply to stand in a condition of obsession, fully accepting one's own outrageous wrath.

Sally and James caricature the plight of people who have heroic angers and spites, but can find no arena big enough to legitimize their energy. The revolutionary values that created America or the determination that nurtured the land are no longer in the service of producing a new civilization. Gardner's people are stuck in a world without new lands to conquer in which progress has become a set of small differences, bigger refrigerators, better TV pictures. In frustration, James sentimentalizes the past and simplifies his life to his fatalism. Sally is nostalgic for a future that does not exist. Both find the present a hard time for heroes.

America has been in a phase so inimical to conviction that people who hold on to values often feel ridiculous. The corporation man's etiquette of other-direction has become an ethical code of compliance that has replaced steadfastness as a value. The person who keeps his ground has not kept up with the times. Sally knows everyone thinks she is a fool for not making a false apology to James to regain her freedom. Locked in her room reading a thriller, *The Smugglers of Black Soul's Rock*, even she has fantasies of capitulation which are perversely reflected in the novel she reads. Intertwining with *October Light*, the thriller holds a distorting, fun house mirror up to it. It reverses the relation of the reader to art. Once the reader whose life was anger and compromise looked for fictional heroes great and firm enough to take him out of his smallness. Sally, whose flintiness is on the grand scale, finds herself consuming a fiction of marijuana smugglers, of accomodators whose only value is self-interest. America supplies us with fantasies which reinforce cynicism. The popular fantasy is of letting go, sinking from hard confrontations into the low tensions of antagonistic cooperation.

Why can't Gardner's heroes make their lives seem worthwhile or transmit their capacity for commitment? Gardner's novels are geneaologies in which the hero obsolesces himself by wrecking his children. Sacrificing them to his own ambition, he puts a curse on his own line by the sheer spillover of his aggression. The Oedipal myth comes alive in Gardner's work as a murderous conflict



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of generations in which sons are never up to the fight. In *Nickel Mountain* Willard, the nasty narcissist, feels his father "nicked him in the balls," and vents his anger by seducing and betraying a loving young girl. In *The Sunlight Dialogues* the Sunlight Man cannot face his anger towards his father and father-in-law who mistreat him. He strangles his father-in-law, but then drops into denial of his fury and paints the word "LOVE" on a four lane highway. In *October Light* James's son Richard has been ridiculed by his father all his life, but can only play act his rage. Dressing in costume on Halloween at 20, he terrifies his uncle and triggers a fatal heart attack. Consumed by guilt he hangs himself. Gardner's fictional sons displace their anger, cover it, or turn it against themselves. They are a generation of passives who cannot equal the instantaneous action of their fathers. James Page has no trouble retaliating against his suicidal son. Right after the boy hangs himself, James burns down his house, pursuing him with his anger beyond the grave. Gardner's young men have no exits from their parents' wrath. They try to erase themselves with drugs or alcohol, or are eaten up by guilt. But nowhere can they escape the image of themselves as damaged men.

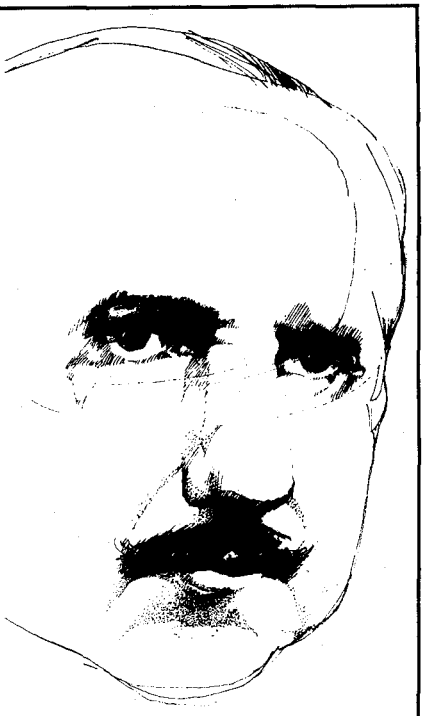
For Carlyle, hero-worship was the proper attitude toward the aristocracy of genius from which one could draw idols. For Emerson, heroes formed an aristocracy of purpose. For Gardner, heroes are unloving people caught in, but never diverted by, other people's needs or escape systems. All around them are people who have failed at conviction, lost purpose, failed even at anger. This is the America that believes in nothing and accommodates to everything. In this America the man of conviction is an oddball too often forced to fight for small stakes.

Were heroes better off in the past? At the edge of historical time even sexual wars were young and huge. In his awesomely conceived 354-page blank verse poem, *Jason and Medeia*, Gardner offers a Jason who is a calculating manipulator of people. His Medeia is a prototype of female power, a sorceress whose strength comes from the irrational forces of night. Medeia's witchcraft has brought Jason the Golden Fleece, killed her brother and Jason's throne-usurping uncle. Jason, eager to marry a young princess who can bring him a throne, calls his betrayal of Medeia an act of reason. She teaches him the price of his ambition by killing their sons and his new bride. This matched pair is no greater in moral stature than Gardner's vindictive flinty Vermonters. Jason is a lesser hero who has needed a woman to bring him his prize and used his wife as a death weapon. Medeia is so consumed by her obsession with Jason she sacrifices her children to the war with him. What happens between them is not different in kind but only in scale from the conflicts of Gardner's modern characters. Spilling out of the kitchen, the bedroom, the town, onto a world stage, the play of male and female power wrecks kingdoms.

Hugeness, intensity and purity of obsession are the last unchallenged heroic values. They flourish in the youngest worlds untouched by classical civilization, urban values or even female power. The brooding epic, full of fatalism and fury, is where every hero knows in advance that the largest triumph belongs to the grave. Going back to the well-spring of the Anglo-Saxon values James Page parodies, Gardner produced an extraordinarily brilliant novel, *Grendel*, a retelling of the Beowulf legend from the monster's point of view. This imaginative perversion of the legend where Beowulf, the champion of civilization, kills Grendel, the embodiment of the terrors of night and nature, resolves into a parable of the birth of modern man as a monster, as the scourge who dies.

In ringing language, Gardner turns the old story of man's necessary, if doomed attempt to defeat the powers of destruction into a power struggle without ideological differences. Gardner's Grendel is evil as calculation, as a conscious choice not to believe in the value of love, in loyalty to any code of honor, or in any attempt to create order and self-esteem. But his Beowulf is a hissing angel of death, an agent of the malicious powers Grendel serves. He only arouses Grendel's desire to return to those gods of malignancy. They are not adversaries, but conspirators. Grendel, wounded by Beowulf, chooses to jump from a cliff, to defeat death by joining it. He is heroic because of the sheer intensity of his blackness, because he allies himself with death, the all-powerful aggressor.

What happens when the primitive hero enters the age of the Christian knight? Heroism there depended on a chivalric code that demanded the great-hearted man be capable of a worship of woman as the helpless creature his might must protect. Love as service to a lady, power as a tool to protect the weak,

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charity and free-flowing generosity are ironically etched by Gardner in the devotion of the Sunlight Man to the sweet, gentle woman he marries only to find she is crazy, violent and convinced of her own omnipotence. As he labors to save her from madness, she burns out his face and destroys his career. Henry Soames in the beautiful novel *Nickel Mountain* is a big-hearted man who marries a young, pregnant girl, cares for her and loves her child as his own. But this modern Joseph has heart trouble and eats himself to death as he is displaced from his business by his wife. Coming of age, she turns out to be an ambitious businesswoman. The knight of charity finds himself done in by his mythology of the helpless princess. In defending the Equal Rights Amendment does Sally display the failure of femininity that plunged the Christian knight to his grave?

Sally and James are past sex; for them male and female are principles in a power play. Sally is Medeia as a media freak, the silly old woman whose best ideas come from the evening news. She is Gardner's example of the American woman as force and fury, the powerful, controlling principle hiding in liberal tolerance and instant sympathy for the underdog. Through her Gardner trivializes the values of the America she represents and elevates misogyny into an attack on the United States of assaultive femininity.

Gardner's men hate the new America and confuse it with women. The smuggler Captain Fist in Sally's thriller has only two choices: "to turn on [women] and everything that reminded him of them with rage and scorn, or accept them, be swallowed up like the rest of us in effeminate softness and confusion—or give into a world so feminized that revolutionaries with slogans of death and home-made atomic bombs are softly analyzed, generously understood. Imagine a whole planet of big-boobed girl congressmen." James Page, raising his gun to kill a bear, thinks he hears the bear speak in his wife's tearful voice "Oh, James, James," and shoots above him, wrecking a lifetime of shooting to hit the mark. Unlocking his heart, the female voice wrecks his "manliness" and makes him vulnerable.

Gardner hates softies. He does not settle on inward, inactive men like the heroes that fill recent fiction, but comes down on the side of action instead of passivity. Using one obsession to attack another, his novels move with a pacing and complexity that are remarkable in current fiction. But as these angry arguments spark each other, Gardner stands back. In not taking sides, he keeps his novels going and avoids the paralysis of action that marks many modern novels. But he arrives instead at a kind of moral paralysis.

Gardner is too much the product of the times he condemns. He is cynical about the aims of heroes from Beowulf to James Page, almost the first and last Anglo-Saxon ideals. Missing in his novels is a sense of masculine purpose, of the hero as the man who can put his power in the service of a worthwhile cause. Gardner's heroes are willful, self-absorbed narcissists who see determination and merit as the same, and whose heroism involves only the willingness to follow their obsessions wherever they might lead. By that logic Evel Knievel is no different than Neil Armstrong, and G. Gordon Liddy is every bit as grand as Winston Churchill. In not making distinctions between the value of one obsession and another, Gardner stalemates his novels.

Gardner's irresolution takes the form of an irony so pervasive it seems to stem from that well of American bitterness that made Herman Melville and Mark Twain, creators of distinctive American heroes, finally black about America's possibilities. Gardner presses his ambivalences into *October Light*, forcing his chauvinism and his nihilism against each other like monuments to two American civilizations. He achieves a disturbing, utterly original novel that gets as close as any book can to that acid cartoon, Grant Wood's "American Gothic."

## Josephine Hendin

*Josephine Hendin*'s forthcoming book, *How We Live: A View of American Fiction Since 1945*, will be published by Oxford University Press.


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## Lancelot
## by Walker Percy

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $8.95)

Walker Percy is one of our most engaging stylists, an original and rather quirky "Southern" novelist who resists facile classifications. He is the author of two excellent novels—*The Moviegoer* and *The Last Gentleman*—and an ambitious though flawed satirical novel, *Love in the Ruins: The Adventures of a Bad Catholic at a Time Near the End of the World*. Not long ago he published a sequence of essays on language, *The Message in the Bottle*, which a linguist friend of mine assures me is fiction also; but there is much in it to admire, and a great deal to provoke thought. And it is beautifully written.

Percy has acquired the reputation of being a "philosophical thinker," which seems to have meant that he has had ideas about such weighty people as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus; but I have never really found in his fiction much evidence to support this view, and no evidence at all that he has responded in an unusually deep or subtle or original way to the complex world-views elaborated by these men. From the very first, in Percy's evocation of New Orleans and his portrayal of Binx the Moviegoer, a man dying slowly of boredom, he has been wonderfully alive to the sounds and textures and odors of life, and his ability to render the baffling solidity of the world made his prose sing with vitality. In *The Moviegoer* and *The Last Gentleman* Percy re-created familiar worlds for us and populated them with odd, rather marvelous characters, sometimes tending toward caricature but memorable nonetheless. No genuine writer of fiction need rely upon philosophical "ideas"—and it was hardly abstract notions of freedom, determinism, existential *angst*, alienation, etc. that made these novels so irresistible. They were artistically and humanly rich, and beautifully crafted.

*Love in the Ruins*, however, was a self-indulgent and rather shrill venture, an attempt on Percy's part to project into the 1980s certain of the social, racial and religious issues of the '60s. *Lancelot* continues this satiric tone, consisting for the most part of a lengthy and crotchety denunciation of what Percy sees to be the sickness of contemporary society. Though there is a story of sorts fleshed out about Lancelot's manic discontent with the world, the other characters are



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curiously flat and vaporous, hardly more than assemblages of shrewdly-noted details, and one is left in the company of a confused and embittered man of the sort who might spend his days writing incoherent letters to the editors of local newspapers:

*California? The West? That's where the two intersect: Billy Graham, Richard Nixon, Las Vegas, drugs, pornography, and every abstract discarnate idea ever hit upon by man roaming the wilderness in search of habitation.*

*Washington, the country, is down the drain. Everyone knows it. The people have lost it to the politicians, bureaucrats, drunk Congressmen, lying Presidents, White House preachers, C.I.A., F.B.I., Mafia, Pentagon, pornographers, muggers, buggers, bribers, bribe takers, rich crooked cowboys, sclerotic Southerners, rich crooked Yankees, dirty books, dirty movies, dirty talk shows, dirty soap operas, fags, lesbians, abortionists . . . dying cities, dying schools . . . .*

It does not matter much that Lancelot, the self-conscious "scion of an old family," is meant to be an ambiguous character, part madman, part sage, an Old Testament prophet screeching against the sins of others while befuddled by (and intoxicated with) his own; nor does it matter that his first-person confession is narrated to a faceless, invisible priest, in what is evidently a mental hospital. His simple-minded prejudices and quixotic dreams for the future are uncomfortably close to ideas Percy has expressed elsewhere, with less vehemence and more art. Though the plot of *Lancelot* is a tired and contrived one involving a cuckolded husband's revenge upon his wife and her decadent friends (for whom we feel, perversely, far more sympathy than we feel for the garrulous and self-righteous central character), it is nevertheless preferable to the empty rhetoric that fills page after page of the novel. Percy is evidently disgusted with what he imagines to be the contemporary world, where "fags" and "lesbians" and "whores" are much in evidence, and where a gentleman experiences difficulty in distinguishing a "lady" from a "whore." Lancelot returns often to this peculiar problem and envisions a kind of Disneyland paradise where all uncomfortable ambiguities are erased:

*We know who we are and where we stand. There will be leaders and there will be followers. . . . There will be men who are strong and pure of heart . . . . There will be virtuous women who are proud of their virtue and there will be women of the street . . . and everyone will know which is which. You can't tell a whore from a lady now, but you will then.*

*Freedom? The New Woman will have perfect freedom. She will be free to be a lady or a whore.*

If Percy only takes his hero halfway seriously, presenting his desperately "evil" gesture as a sort of Dostoyevskian plunge into suffering (Lancelot murders several people, not very convincingly), it is still the case that such nonsense is nonsence on the page and grievously weakens his novel. Again and again Lancelot returns to the "problem" of female liberation, the "problem" of needing to divide women into ladies and whores and of dealing with them appropriately. When his simple-minded but vivacious young wife loses interest in him and takes on both an acting career and a lover, and plans on travelling to London to make a film, Lancelot deliberately plans her murder, and though he complains of a certain "coldness" and "numbness" of the spirit at the novel's conclusion, it isn't altogether clear that the author considers him mad. Misguided, perhaps, but fundamentally justified. We live in Sodom, don't we?—where "voracious" women have the power to turn hapless young men into homosexuals? (Lancelot's son has become a "mild" homosexual as a result of the appetites of overly-liberated young girls.) Therefore it's a worthwhile endeavor, the seeking of the unholy grail of evil. The faceless Catholic priest (with his painfully symbolic name Percival/Parsifal) seems to be offering Lancelot absolution at the end of the novel, for he assures him that there is a "new life" awaiting him once he leaves the mental hospital.

There are, of course, many fine, winning passages in *Lancelot*, especially in the opening chapters when the mad hero is more lyric than bitter. Though we hear Binx behind Lancelot's voice much of the time, his perceptions are comically dry and convincing, and when Percy's style is good it carries all before it:

*The mystery lies in the here and the now. The mystery is: What is one to do with oneself? As you get older you realize the trick time is playing, and that unless you*


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*do something about it, the passage of time is nothing but the encroachment of the horrible banality of the past on the pure future. The past devours the future like a tape recorder, converting pure possibility into banality . . . .*

There are light, deft comic characterizations of actors, one of them a very handsome young leading man named Dana who is a complete cipher, and whom directors adore because they "can create him from the beginning like a doll." Dana is so stupid he barely had sense not to drown when he fell off his surfboard in *Beach Blanket Bingo*. In the trashy movie being filmed at Lancelot's mansion he represents the life-force and is, in the glib words of one of the movie-makers, "The new Christ, of course." Percy is always good at creating a certain kind of part-liberated black, and his characterization of a restless millionaire Texan as a shrewd moron is a comic one. It's difficult to know, however, whether these poeple are to be taken seriously, or whether Percy means them to be stereotypes.

If there is a central problem with *Lancelot*, it is this confusion of tones, this mixture of genres. The novel seems incompletely realized in a number of ways. Throughout, Lancelot is addressing his old friend Percival, who has come to visit him in the hospital, but Percival is never allowed into the story—neither the present story, nor the past; he does not figure in the narrative at all. Yet one has the feeling that Percy must have originally intended to bring him into Lancelot's life in a meaningful way. There are other nagging inconsistencies. We are told repeatedly that Lancelot's and Margot's early married life was very happy, and we are treated rather more than is necessary to detailed descriptions of the pair's antic love-making (which for some reason are flatly unconvincing: Percy is a master at delineating ennui but shrill and over-wrought when it come to passion), yet we are also told that the couple often drank themselves into oblivion and that Lancelot had become, over the years, near-catatonic in a state of constant alcoholic stupor. How is it possible that a healthy, happy marriage should involve such excessive drinking? Margot is described as fetchingly attractive at times, and at other times absurdly gross—as when she blows her nose with her fingers on Royal Street of New Orleans, or eats her breakfast "like a horse." Percy wishes to mock the woman and yet he must build her up, he must force us to believe in Lancelot's regard for her; otherwise Lancelot's desire for revenge will not seem believable. But the novel shows the strain and one soon ceases to care what happens to the characters, for it is evident that the author is merely manipulating them from scene to scene.

Lancelot himself is a familiar Percy character. He is alternately eloquent and garrulous; a failed lawyer, an idler, a televison news addict as Binx was a movie addict—despite the fact that nothing ever happens on the television news. He speaks of evil, and of the Devil, and of sin, and of the disappointing direction the contemporary Catholic Church has taken, as if his very idleness and lack of involvement with the world gave him a certain authority. Meant to be Stavrogin, he sounds rather more like Marmeladov; and one cannot help but be offended by his continual smug superiority when he speaks of "women" and of "liberals." If for some people involvement in civil rights issues in the '60s was merely fashionable, a way of passing the time, it is hardly the case that all liberals shared Lancelot's—or is it Percy's?—bemused detachment.

If *Lancelot* is one of the most disappointing novels I have read in recent years, it is perhaps a tribute to the promise that Percy's earlier works have made; and I have no doubt that he will write richer and far more convincing novels in the future.

**Joyce Carol Oates**

*Joyce Carol Oates*'s most recent book is a novel, *Childwold* (Vanguard).

## The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights by John Steinbeck ed. by Chase Horton

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux; $10)

John Steinbeck undertook his translation of Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* with tremendous enthusiasm, comparing the Winchester manuscript with Caxton's edition, reading hundreds of books, traveling to Italy and England, consulting the great Arthurian scholar Eugene Vinaver, and after two years of preparation settling down in 1959 near Glastonbury to write what is now published as *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights*. Then, dissatisfied, he put the work away. When he died in 1968, it was still unfinished. In an appendix to *The Acts* appears the correspondence carried on by Steinbeck, while he was working on the book, with his agent Elizabeth Otis and with Chase Horton, a bookshop owner and friend. Since *The Acts* was a work in progress, the insight into the creative process that comes from comparing letters with text may be the best justification for publishing the book.

In a sense Steinbeck had always been reading and re-doing Malory, for there are Arthurian themes and echoes throughout his work. The Caxton *Morte D'Arthur*, given him when he was nine, inspired him to act out its adventures. In his introduction to *The Acts* Steinbeck traces his love of language, his moral ideas, and his sympathy for the oppressed to this enchanting book. He structured two early novels around Arthurian themes, the quest of *The Cup of Gold* and the paisano Round Table of *Tortilla Flat;* however, each time his hero started out in Camelot and ended up in a spiritual wasteland.

It is probable that what sent Steinbeck back to Malory in 1956 was a despairing mistrust of his creative powers: "I want to forget how to write and learn all over again with the writing growing out of the material," he said. Also, he had a helpless feeling that he did not understand his own age. In this he identified with Malory, and his letters reflect the intensity of the identification. He saw the author of the *Morte* caught up like him in shifting and perilous times and trying to order them through his work. In a flash of insight he saw that Malory's "self-character," the one into which every author puts himself as he is and as he would be, is Lancelot, the man who could not win the Grail because he was stained with sin and imperfection, but who nevertheless could father Galahad. And so, "Malory-Lancelot has in a sense won the Quest." And Steinbeck-Lancelot, one assumes, can achieve it too—and like Malory transmit a moral heritage. In his introduction Steinbeck says that the book is designed "for my own young sons and for other sons not so young." (Daughters, presumably, can read it if they want to.) Using the Winchester manuscript of the *Morte D'Arthur*, he intended to put the stories into simple language without changing them. His desire was to re-create a living story with significance for the present.

Steinbeck began to write in loneliness



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and uncertainty. But then pleasure and confidence came. As he worked he found it necessary to cut, to explain, to provide continuity—and so he began to feel the work was his own.

Then he received a shock. After reading the Merlin story, Elizabeth Otis was "confused. . .and disappointed." Steinbeck was even more so. He did not, however, wish to change his style and method in order to write an adaptation like T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*. He was sick of his old ways and old tricks, he wrote. But he assured Otis that the work would be rewritten later and that meanwhile he was feeling freer about changing Malory's stories. His letters show him proceeding for a time with renewed confidence. But then he began to express dissatisfaction with Malory's work and finally with his own—it was just "a repetition of things I have written before." And so he suspended work on *The Acts*, though he returned to it for a time in 1965.

Steinbeck died without finishing, correcting, or editing his manuscript. The original plan was to translate all of the *Morte D'Arthur;* this was amended to omit certain parts and concentrate on the Lancelot episodes. The translation, along with commentaries between the tales, was to appear in two volumes. What is published here corresponds to only about one-fourth of Malory's work, through the tale of Sir Lancelot. There is a short introduction, but the commentaries were never written. Chase Horton reports that Steinbeck did not edit his typescript but does not report what editing he himself has done. According to a note about the manuscript by Roy Simmonds, Steinbeck left 154 pages of manuscript of the tale of Sir Gareth; if so, this portion has been omitted without a word from the editor.

Something less than one-half of *The Acts* comes close to straight translation of the stories of the coming of Arthur to the throne, Balin, the marriage of Arthur and the enchantment of Merlin. Steinbeck has added some explanations, some comments, some scene-painting, and some human interest details—but not too many. Some of the supernatural has been subtracted. The work compares favorably with Keith Baines' translation, which appeared in 1962. Both versions suffer from flatness, but Steinbeck's style is better. He was trying for "a timeless English," which is very successful.

A change begins with the "Morgan Le Fay" episode and accelerates in the final tales of Gawain, Ewain, and Marhalt and Lancelot, written after the shock of Otis' disapproval and the concurrent new feeling of freedom to revise Malory. Incidents, characterizations, backgrounds, themes are invented, changed and developed. Malory's distancing of characters is replaced by carefully established motivation and humanizing detail. But cuteness, sentimentality, sententiousness, contemporary idioms, and some monstrous overwriting creep in and vulgarize the material; Malory's world becomes Disney's world, sexed up—and also T. H. White's world. It is unfortunate that the author never carefully edited the work because his ideas about shaping characters and connecting Malory's incidents are highly intelligent. With his usual interest in men in groups, Steinbeck develops the social importance of Arthur's court in dealing with the difficulties of peace through establishing the King's Justice. Steinbeck is also focusing on Lancelot, inventing a series of Malorian temptations by witch queens to express latent conflicts in the knight and developing the relationship with Guinevere much earlier and more fully. And Steinbeck expands women's roles—but unhappily turns all women, Morgan and Guinevere alike, into manipulators of men.

The opening sentences of the first and last paragraphs of *The Acts* illustrate the contrast between the two parts. The first paragraph begins: "When Uther Pendragon was King of England his vassal, the Duke of Cornwall, was reputed to have committed acts of war against the land." The final paragraph begins: "Their bodies locked together as though a trap had sprung." Quite a difference. This last was not written for sons, nor for admirers of the *Morte* who recall that Malory did not know what Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere did together, since love was different in those days.

Steinbeck wanted too much to make Malory's work his own and to make Lancelot a version of himself. He couldn't make the book turn out right: "I don't know what to do with it and I am too old to kid myself about it," he wrote. *The Acts* is not a unified and complete work. Yet, as a revelation of its author and his way of working, it is of much interest.

**Mary C. Williams**

*Mary C. Williams* is managing editor of *Southern Poetry Review* and is making a study of American legends in the 20th century.

## Poet in Our Time by Eugenio Montale translated by Alastair Hamilton

(Urizen Books; $5.95)

In addition to five volumes of luminous verse published during the past half-century, Eugenio Montale, now in his 80th year, has also published two important volumes of non-fiction: *Fuori di casa (Away from Home)*, a book of travel essays; and *Auto da fé*, a collection of essays, articles and reviews on a wide range of topics, many of these *"terza pagina"* pieces written for the literary page of Italian newspapers. In 1972, Riccardo Campo, a critic and friend of Montale, put together a small anthology of Montale's prose; *Nel nostro tempo (In Our Time)* was a kind of prose scrapbook of bits and pieces snipped from various sources, mostly from *Auto da fé*. Aphoristic, gnomic, incisive, *Nel nostro tempo* offered Italian readers a handy, thumbnail guide to the poet's attitudes and opinions. Now Urizen Books, a new publishing cooperative, has brought out a translation, the first sampling of Montale's prose to appear in book form here.

As he notes in his brief preface, Montale has always steeped himself in the sensuousness of time, living inside the force of time passing. His poetry has dramatized the experience of a man who does not merely bear witness to change, but who suffers it, his life a sometimes ironic passion play, in which he plays the hero. Montale's prose, like his poetry, is his way of *"feeling* time," of swimming in the stream. Although his prose is more reserved and cautious than the poetry, and more consistently ironic in tone, it allows Montale to explore in more practical detail a set of contemporary issues, underpinned at every point by his special brand of humanism.

Montale's obsession with time, and with the practical dilemmas it raises, spills over into his thinking about poetry. In a culture which places such high value on killing time (one essay in *Auto da fé* is entitled "Ammazzare il tempo"), where TV rules and mere behavior often passes for art, the traditional isolated artist is steadily becoming discredited. An elitist by nature, Montale distrusts collectivism of any sort and fears that modern man's religion of the commonplace will lead western literature into a new kind of stifling social realism.



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"Where everyone is an artist," he has said elsewhere, "no artist exists." He sees serious eccentric work eclipsed by "art for everybody," sees poetry threatened by the one-minute poem, an art of grocery lists and recipes, sign or gesture rather than mysterious speech. Some of his most barbed remarks have been aimed at semiology, a thriving academic industry in Italy; he is suspicious of any mode of criticism which would reduce poetry merely to a conglomerate of linguistic data.

Montale's esthetics are almost classically simple. Poetry is a means of eluding the traps of time even while living *in our time;* it outwits mortality by abiding cunningly inside mortality. Insofar as it is "language historicized, a report," poetry guarantees history, provisionally fills the void of the present with a singular impassioned voice. Though the poem is a "machine made of words," poetry as process begins in sacred unknowing, reasonable expression born in the mess of unreason. Respecting mystery as he does (indeed, nurturing himself on it) Montale is disturbed to see it displaced by mere secular puzzlement, dime-store agnosticism, the "intoxicating collective pseudo-truths" of our age.

Since his poetic career has been so much an encounter with history and its legacies, Montale is critical of modern man's refusal to confront and understand the moral responsibilities passed on by history. "Man is running away from time, from responsibility, and from history." In a world geared to mass media, the abdication of individual responsiblity is clearly reflected in the vulgarization ("in its etymological sense") of the arts. To worship the momentary is a way of worshipping our own death, and this usually goes hand in hand with the cult of energy. Montale reminds us, however, that if energy is torn loose from its historical armature, it becomes pure waste. (He still refers with cool disdain to the Futurists.) When he speaks of history, he means not a backlog of data or artifacts, but rather the flux of consciousness, human continuity, the race constantly aware of its roots stretching into the distant past.

Rather than indulge in what Gramsci called "those vulgar moods of optimism and pessimism," Montale settles on a deeply felt scepticism toward anything that threatens to sever us from our origins. He has made it a point to be a man of his time (the objections of some of his Marxist critics notwithstanding), yet he can also speak quite matter-of-factly about the presence, the *presentness,* of Mnemosyne. He distrusts all programs—cultural, social, political — as momentary expedients, returning time and again to his fixed point of reference, the poet, who relies not on predesignated goals but solely on his emotional need to fill a void, to obey the instinct for form. Montale's sense of the miraculous has remained intact throughout a long and difficult life, and his will toward the marvelous has been sharpened rather than blunted by his controversial humanism.

Unfortunately, Alastair Hamilton's translation tends to misrepresent Montale's personality. By opting for literal translation, Hamilton fails to shape the English text into a facsimile of the personality which comes through in the Italian. From the translation we might never know that Montale, working with the slippery abstractions of Italian rhetoric, is in fact a lucid, quick-witted, allusive stylist. The translator's fidelity to Italian syntax and vocabulary often leads him into flat, inconsequential English prose, and a great deal of resonance is lost in the transposition. Addressing the problem of historical awareness and continuity, Montale writes:

> *Il male, il vuoto assoluto, sarebbe se andassero perduti il significato e il ricordo del tempo che dovra confluire nel tempo di domani.*

Hamilton sticks very close to the original:

> *Evil, total emptiness, would result from the loss of the memory and meaning of time which must flow into the time of tomorrow.*

A more shapely translation would play more loosely with the syntax of the Italian:

> *If we lose the meaning and memory of time—of time present flowing into time future—we will be left with an absolute void, evil.*

Also, whenever Montale uses the French word *engagement* (and he does so quite frequently), he means specifically *political* commitment, usually with reference to the artist; by translating the word simply as "commitment," Hamilton accidentally and wrongfully opens up the concept to include too broad a range of meanings in English (in this instance, I think the French is best left untranslated, since its special sense is quite clear in context).

Montale's prose deserves a wider audience here, especially since his observations are relevant to our own notorious fear of temporal continuity. *Poet in Our Time* is little more than a sampler, but for the time being it will have to suffice until something more comprehensive, and more eloquent, comes along.

**W. S. Di Piero**

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# Reconsideration

## Eugenio Montale at 80

Eugenio Montale who turned 80 last October 12, is by common consent Italy's greatest living poet. He is the survivor of the generation of poets who came to prominence before and just after World War I: Pound, Eliot, Valéry, Wallace Stevens. Outside his own country he is not so well known as these others, nor does his name reverberate like the names of his contemporaries, Ungaretti and Quasimodo. In a half dozen poems at a minimum, however, he is the peer of them all.

Montale has not written much, or he has "blotted" or discarded as much again as he has written—five volumes of poems published incrementally over 50 years; a volume of anecdotal prose sketches; translations of poetry in English. He is a man of formidable silences and is not called a Hermetic poet without reason. He once said: "There should be an eleventh commandment—don't bother people."

By birth Montale is a native of Genoa and the storm-swept Ligurian coast, remembered in mournful poems like "The Shore-Watchers' House." This makes him the Italian equivalent of a dour, tightfisted Scot. Like Hugh Mac-



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Diarmid, the voice of Scottish Gaeldom, he squeezes such value as he can from stunted flowers that grow in the wasteland. Italians like to tell about the starving Genovese, holed up in a mountain cabin in the dead of winter, resigning himself to the end when he hears a knock on the door. *Chi e*? It is the Red Cross to the rescue. But you don't get something for nothing. The Genovese says: *Ho gia da*. "I've already given."

For the niggardly side of this poet, look at the poetry beginning with the first volume, *Cuttlefish Bones* (1925). "All you get here is some twisted syllable." For the suspiciousness, to which reticence and humility are closely allied, look at the biography. Montale's first gesture when, a year ago, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature, was to disconnect the telephone.

The biography is a record of connections broken off. "I no longer want connections, reservations, snares," social and otherwise—he says in one of the *Xenia* poems commemorating the death of his wife (1963)—"the disgrace of a man who believes that reality consists in what he sees." Not wanting or believing, he presents the outsider. His autobiographical reflections are entitled characteristically, *Racconto d'uno sconosciuto*—The Tale of an Unknown Man. On the other hand he believes powerfully in the sense of a man bearing witness, and what he witnesses is the minatory and quickening power of the past, rising in judgment against the present.

The fascists perceived in him their implacable enemy and of course they were right. He wouldn't proclaim the Emperor's new clothes. This refusal constitutes an affirmative act. Montale's poetry written between the world wars is not overtly political, like that of MacDiarmid or Stephen Spender. But in its aloofness and the personal orders it makes, it offers a lesson of coherence against the incoherent world of Mussolini. In Montale's third volume, *La Bufera e Altro* (1956)—"The Storm and Other Things"—the poet memorializes Hitler's visit to Florence with the word: *e piú nessuno è incolpevole*: "and no one is innocent any more." He is not calling us to political participation, except for this—that politics-writ-large is an exercise in distinctions between the real thing and the counterfeit copy. Concurrently it is the placing of right emphases between what tells, and so makes for, our redemption and what is in the present, and so consigns us to hell—the vapid hell of Dante's *menefreghisti*, lost souls who are lost as they don't give a damn. In terms of poetry there is no connection, there is a total disjunction between political responsibility and the hortatory mode. Nonetheless the responsibility persists. Only it has to do with acuteness of seeing.

The life of the times lives in the poetry but is always at a remove. *Satura* (1962), the fourth of Montale's five volumes, speaks of Italy after the war, the banality that might have been avoided. I am only guessing but the temptation is irresistible; the poetry endures not as it is personal but as it constitutes a public performance, the mirror gathering the gloom. Illumination is reserved not to causes but effects.

One part of the performance acknowledges but obscurely the fascist ascendency ("a mystical gulf burned and bedecked with hooked crosses"); another Montale's service as an infantry officer in World War I. The acknowledging is muted, as in the "Mottetti" or "News from Amiata." It might be Thermopylae this poet is remembering, except for the granitic point of view. Like Hemingway's equivocal hero, Colonel Cantwell, whom he evokes in an untitled poem from *Satura*, he knows how boring one man's war is to any other man, so forbears to dilate on it. He is saying: "No one is interested in it, abstractly, except soldiers and there are not many soldiers." There are not, in Montale's world, many human beings who are fully credentialed.

Already this was the radical sense of Montale's poetry, addressed to his comic-tragic contemporaries and their sawdust Caesar after the march on Rome. So in the '30s he was stripped of his modest sinecure as director of the Vieusseux Library in Florence. The event did not take him by surprise. "My civil status," he noted wryly in the *Xenia* poems, "was doubtful from the beginning." Montale is the modern hero who is also a pariah. He allows no more reality to Christian Democracy and its adversary the Communist Party than to the blackshirts who preceded them both. Red and black and the colorless nonpersons who occupy the middle ground are all moving aimlessly in a "dreary limbo of deficient existences."

The conventional view of Montale is grudging admiration mixed with disapproval and dismay. He is a soldier but doing service far from the front (*imboscato*). His workaday function in the years after the war as music critic and contributing editor to the literary pages of the Milanese paper *Corriere della Sera* is supposed to reflect his disengagement from the contemporary scene. So we get Montale the dandy or bellelettrist. He has never cared much to argue the charges against him, affirming that he was like "a cricket being called in question for not being a lizard."

In his early 70s Montale the poet became the public man, invested by decree of President Saragat with the title of Senator-for-life. I think the grandiose gesture changes nothing, as it changed nothing for Yeats when in 1922 he accepted a similar honor from President Cosgrove of the Irish Free State. What the senatorial dignity has entailed for this taciturn poet is the loss of privacy, which has its comic side. Now strangers are pounding on Montale's door, trying to force the barricade presented by Gina, the housekeeper who fills him and them with a sacrosanct terror, though he praises her bean soup and her egg flips, propitiating the world as he can.

No, he confesses to one of these importunate strangers, an interviewer from *Il Tempo*, he won't move to Rome to fill up the role call at Palazzo Madama. And in fact it is hard to see him as living anywhere else but in the severely classical setting created by Bramante around the Duomo in Milan. "Petty politics," he says, "are for the professionals," clearly a term meant in opprobrium. Still the presidential appointment requires that he make himself useful. But what is that? "I don't know, some commission." This doesn't seem particularly helpful. The interviewer seeks diplomatically to turn the conversation.

"You have often gone on record as not understanding or loving present-day society. What are the phenomena that are offensive about it, that justify your sense of something unbecoming?" Montale is gruffly amused. "The word *disadatto*"—unbecoming, unfit—"is good. It was not ever applied by me. I've been little adapted from childhood on." The pridefulness cuts both ways. Montale is hanging out his ambiguous sign. He is mocking our certitude in this quotation from *Xenia* and partly he is mocking himself. "One of my first critics spoke of a minimum of tolerance for life. I don't know if this formula is altogether just because, in reality, I still live with pleasure."

I take it seriously, the doling out of approbation. I think it sticks the center of Montale's accomplishment. Hardhearted persons whose sensibility



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and intelligence are thin insist that *God's in His Heaven, The best is yet to be*, all that. Montale, as he knows more and feels more, keeps his counsel. "On the whole I live with pleasure, though not every day. But often I'm happy to be alive." Most of us in honesty cannot begin to say so much.

Montale is remarkably constant to his vision, and in the long career nothing changes much. Only the manner grows more patient, not of answers exactly but questions. What is Life, etc.? "The Hawks," a poem of the late 1960's, agitates the question but only in metaphor, which precludes definitive statement. Life, incarnate in a scuffle of soft plumes, tears itself to pieces, so breaks momentarily from the unendurable web that confines it. The fishers whom Montale celebrates in his last published volume, *Il Diario* (1973), are concerned with something else than our eternal salvation.

*I have seen more than one of them*
*bring to the slime of the pools*
*flashes of lapis lazuli.*

The kingdom from which the bird or deity streaks like an arrow, invincible and evanescent—the qualifier *imprendibile* allowing either reading or both—is measured in millimeters. Montale thinks the measure is just.

In Montale's second book of poems, *Le Occasioni* (1939)—which Robert Bly wants to translate, I think happily, as "The Instances," iridescent moments when the divine enters in—we get a striking anticipation of his use of metaphor. I am writing you, says the poet, "here, from this remote table, from the honey cell of a sphere launched into space." The sphere is the world but buffeted by storms. "Outside it is raining." The honey is real, also an anodyne like Yeats's "honey of generation" which betrays as it assuages. The years of youth are "heavy with honey" and irrecoverably past. Or they compose a nest or nursery which comforts only so long as our horizons are narrow, not opening yet on "this infinite sea of clay and refuse." Time drives us from our nests and burns the thicket whence we came, and against its consuming progress Montale offers no stay. The lineaments of existence to which he compels our attention are hardfeatured. But the phrase needs modifying as it suggests a personal God.

Montale declines to offer the truth we take on faith but his poetry makes room for the humbler truths we gather from our quotidian experience. "God" exists as you, whom I know, confess Him. The personal relation sponsors the Creator, who is ourselves at full stretch. The billowing sea we discover "beyond the bars" and on which the bark of our salvation appears is not waiting out there to transport us to heaven or hell. In Montale's world the bark itself is both real and illusory. It figures our adhesion to earth, which is all we have, and it materializes as we open ourselves to feeling and perceiving.

"There are instances in which the bottle tossed in the sea finally reaches its destination." Montale is praising the modern French poet René Char, the way his poems bring distant auditors alive. "In Char the sudden instant, the moment, swings open its doors and plunges him into the concrete experience of eternity." Here is the sense of Montale's title, *Le Occasioni*. In the poems of that volume, in all his best poetry, divinity enters in "that instant which is eternal" when "the flash of lightning candies the trees and walls and surprises them," dispelling the dark.

**Russell Fraser**

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**TRB,** *from page 2*

over 65. Can they file income taxes retroactively?

I keep thinking about the Inaugural and that happy stroll of President Carter and his wife and Amy down Pennsylvania Avenue after he got out of the bullet-proof limousine. It was fun seeing a procession a mile long halted while Amy tied her shoe. What Carter said will be soon forgotten but not what he did. Why shouldn't other presidents mingle more with the people? I will tell you why.

Because in the words of the Warren Commission which investigated the murder of President Kennedy: "One out of every five presidents since 1865 has been assassinated; there have been attempts on the lives of one out of three." That was written before two attempts on President Ford, the shooting of George Wallace and the deaths of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

Easy access to firearms in America deprives us of the happy mingling of president and public. Remember that Oswald bought the gun that killed Kennedy for $21.45 from an advertisement he saw in the *American Rifleman*. *The Economist* in England (like the rest of the world shocked at America's barbaric murder rate) suggested to Carter: "Perhaps the single most significant earnest of a tough but humane presidency would be a pledge to work, against the lobbies and vested interests, for an effective gun law."

The Carter Inaugural walk was magnificent. It was also folly.

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**Kauffmann,** *from page 24*

rather more than less, *sui generis*. She too has made a collection of musical numbers into a vital theater piece.

*The Club* (Circle in the Square, Downtown). This is called "a musical diversion by Eve Merriam." It is not. It's Merriam's idea for presenting some turn-of-the-century songs by other people. Her idea was to take a group of old songs in sentimental praise of women or with hearty-male wit about women and have them performed as they might have been done in a male club *c.*1900—except that all the performers are women in male evening dress.

This would make a good 15-minute sketch, in which the singers' true sex would constitute the comment on the inanity or barbarity of the sentiments. But *The Club* lasts an hour and a half and must strain very badly to keep going. It even has to pad out with a number about the impersonation of women by these men who are played by women. (Possibly suggested by Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*, the young man—sung by a mezzo-soprano—who has to masquerade as a girl.)

Because this show goes on long after it has made its satiric point, the focus shifts from the satiric idea to the intrinsic execution of the numbers, and this is sad. I can't see why I had to listen to a bad rendition of "Vesti la giubba" just because the bad singer was a woman in male evening dress; or watch an execrable black tap dancer just because it was a woman in the livery of a male club servant.

No one ever decided whether the setting was England or America. We get names like Algy and a London atmosphere, then we get Midwestern "caaalf" and "haaalf" and a number about the American Beauty rose.

The final wet plop is the curtain speech in which one of the "male" women undoes her hair and says that no offence was intended, it was all merely a diversion. If *The Club* really *wasn't* intended to offend and unsettle, then it's pointless. But either way it's boring.



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# Washington Diarist

*Style*

**As the new Congress gets down** to its business, everyone hopes for some color from the two freshmen, Daniel P. Moynihan and S. I. Hayakawa. The Senate has become unbearably dull. I wonder if there is anything to Henry Cabot Lodge's suggestion that "there was probably more humor in the Senate when senators were elected by the state legislatures than has been true since 1913 when the Constitution was changed to provide for their election by the people. Although senators still have a sense of humor, they often have to be careful not to show it." One knows what he means: the oligarchic parliaments of the 18th century in England were much more colorful than the democratic parliaments since then. But the thing can still be done by men like Moynihan and Hayakawa who, if they cannot speak their own minds, would prefer not to be elected. Aristocracy is in the blood of individuals, not in systems of election.

**I have been reading** the fascinating book, *A Scientist at the White House*, by George B. Kistiakowsky, who was Special Assistant for Science and Technology to Dwight Eisenhower. He talks of Edward Teller, the inventor of the hydrogen bomb, as "paranoiac" and "hysterical" in his wish to intensify the arms race, and calls him the "most dangerous man in the United States" at that time. This reminds me of the occasion, a couple of years ago, when money was given to the University of Colorado for a new center, if it not only employed Teller, but was called after him. The faculty protested, and the president of the university was in a jam, until one wise professor pointed out that "buildings are only named after dead people." In time the center fizzled out.

**Some last words about that speech** and that walk. I am amongst those who are glad that there was an Inaugural Address about which there is precious little to say. At least it did not leave us murmuring, "Promises, Promises, Promises." I can understand those who wished to be stirred. But I cannot understand the people who still object to Jimmy Carter's way of speaking. It really seems to grate on some Yankee ears, as if the Civil War is still to be fought in elocution schools. Anyone who finds his delivery odd has simply never heard the sound of the South. There is nothing more strange about his delivery than that of Martin Luther King, Jr., when he spoke in front of the Lincoln Memorial. Is the diction of a black southerner to be accepted, but not that of a white southerner? That is a perverse example of a double standard.

**Trevelyan on the literary progress of English politics:** "In the seventeenth century, Members of Parliament quoted the Bible, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the classics, and in the twentieth century, nothing." A friend who hated Carter's speech and dredged up the quote said it was more apt for America. "In Britain today, one might still exhaust one's extremities counting politicians who actually read." Jimmy Carter quoted Scripture in his Inaugural Address: Micah on humility. "Micah Who?" one of the up-close audience was overheard asking. Has there been a public figure who didn't cite that same text? And is its spirit in keeping with *Why Not the Best?*

**And the walk.** There is no need to make a song and dance about it—Amy did that anyhow—but it matters all the same. There is a symbolism that tells. While he was still in office, Herbert Hoover sat behind a row of bayonets in the White House during the first Bonus March. Two months after Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated, Mrs. Roosevelt went out to greet the leaders of the second Bonus March, and even led them in a singing of "The Long, Long Trail." I am not suggesting that the walk down Pennsylvania Avenue was as significant as that, but it counted. Even the ordinary way in which the Carters held hands as they walked has its importance. Many people during inauguration week commented on how Jimmy Carter is always throwing his arms around people, men and women, with a wholly unaffected pleasure. We are beginning to learn some of the qualities that enabled him to make such an impression in private when he began his long quest.

**To watch or not to watch.** Wherever I have gone this week, I have found people deciding whether they should watch ABC's huge filmed version of *Roots*, "based on" Alex Haley's novel about a black American family. By Monday night, the second of the "unprecedented eight straight nights" on which the stuff was to be shown, I found that most people had decided not to watch. What a trivialization it is of a great theme. Everything in it is cleaned up. The blacks in the jungle of Africa ran around in what seemed to be diapers washed in "all-purpose" Cheer. None of the smell of a slave ship came across the screen. "It is all sanitary," said one friend. "It is like 'The Waltons,'" that cleaned-up story of an American rural family in the depression years, said another. "A black James Michener," said a third. So much money spent, such a paltry thing to show for it. Will televison ever grow up?

**When artists argue about politics** there is always a certain air of unreality. Shouldering their brushes, with their canvases as shields, they rush forward to tilt at the fortresses of power. Louise Nevelson, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell head a long list of eminent American artists who have dissociated themselves from the opening of the new art museum in Paris in protest against the release of the terrorist Abu Daoud. Robert Rauschenberg and Larry Rivers, among others, are still participating. Whatever one feels about this particular struggle among the artists, two things are clear. The museum looks as ugly as its full name, Le Centre National d'Art et Culture Georges Pompidou. And the dependence of the lavish culture palace on American art says all that needs to be said about the state of French culture.

**With Walter Mondale off visiting our allies**, one is forced to wonder again if the vice president can at last be given a genuine role. Not many of us think of John Nance Garner as a "chief policy adviser," as Carter has called Mondale. He used to go to Uvalde in his beloved Rio Grande country as much as possible, to hunt and fish. But now and then FDR searched him out there by phone, to take advantage of his cool political head. At the beginning of Roosevelt's first term, the situation in Cuba seemed to be threatening, perhaps needing the intervention of American troops. FDR called Garner and asked him what he should do. Garner: "I'd keep out of Cuba if I could." FDR: "But suppose an American citizen is shot?" Garner: "I think I'd wait and see which American it is." If Mondale gives his President as cool political advice as that, he will already have done a lot.



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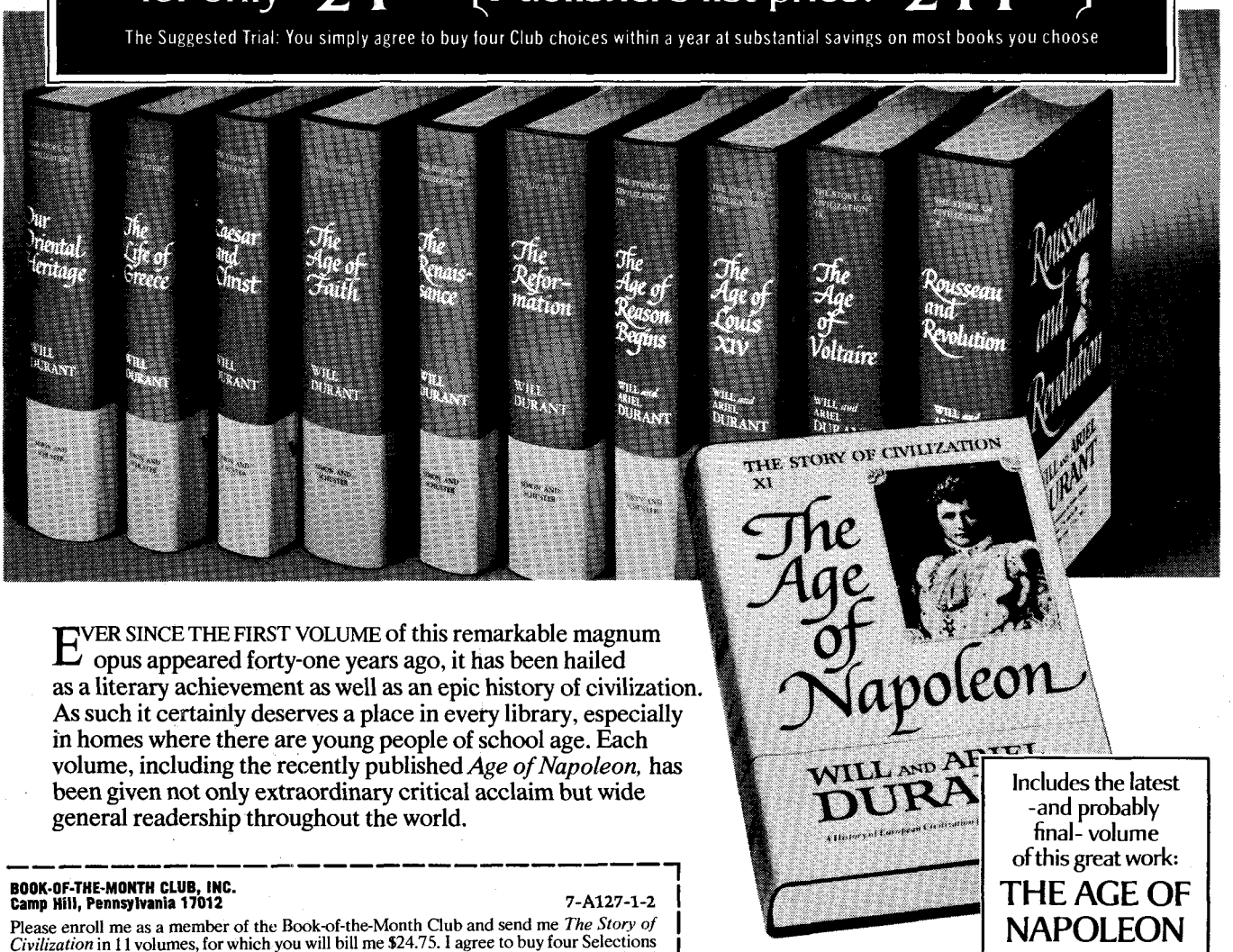


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